PARSONS

HIS

Chriſtian Directory,

Being a Treatiſe of

Holy Reſolution.

In Two Parts.

Put into Modern Engliſh;

And now made Publick,

For the Inſtruction of the Ignorant;

The Conviction of the Unbelieving;

The Awakning and Reclaiming the Vicious,

And for,

Confirming the Religious in their Good Purpoſes.

LONDON:

Printed for RICHARD SARE at *Grays-Inn-Gate* in *Holborn*, MDCXCIX.

1509/2079.

PARSONS

HIS

Christian Directory,

Being a Treatise of

Holy Resolution.

In Two Parts.

Put into Modern English;

And now made Publick,

For the Instruction of the Ignorant;

The Conviction of the Unbelieving;

The Awakning and Reclaiming the Vicious,

And for,

Confirming the Religious in their Good Purposes.

LONDON:

Printed for RICHARD SARE at *Grays-Inn-Gate* in *Holborn*, MDCXCIX.


BRITISH LIBRARY
29
76
FEB

THE PREFACE.

THE Book, of which this is an Abridgment, hath obtained ſo juſt an Eſteem in the World, for its Piety and Uſefulneſs, that it will be needleſs to ſay any thing in commendation of it. And therefore the only thing I think incumbent upon me at preſent is, to account for the Alterations made in that form, under which it now appears to the Reader.

The very conſiderable Changes, which have happened to many of our Modern Languages, and particularly the great Improvements made in the Engliſh Tongue, within this laſt Century, are a mighty prejudice, even to the moſt valuable Things written before that time. No weight of Matter, or Beauty of Thought, is ſufficient to procure them that good acceptance with the generality of Readers, which they would not fail to find, if dreſſed in a more modiſh Garb. And therefore the making ſuch Writers ſpeak, as if they had lived and converſed with us at this Day, (while the force and ſubſtance of what they ſay is preſerved entire,) is ſo far from an Injury, that, I preſume, it will be allowed a Kindneſs and Advantage. And this hath been attempted in the preſent Tract with due Fidelity, where the matter was eſteemed either profitable, or neceſſary to the main Argument, and ſerving the Intereſts of True Religion, and a Good Life.

The only Difficulty ſeems to be, how I ſhall juſtify thoſe Differences between this and ſome of the former Editions, where ſeveral Things are wholly omitted, and ſuch as the Author, no doubt, thought very material to his

Deſign. And here I ſhall make no ſcruple to declare wherein I have varied from him, and the Motives for my doing ſo: By no means deſpairing, that the Reaſons, which perſwaded me to make ſuch Alterations, will prevail with others, who ſhall conſider the Caſe without prejudice, not to diſapprove them.

My general Intention of reducing the Chriſtian Directory *into a narrower compaſs, is, that it may be more ſuitable to the Memory and the Leiſure of Vulgar Readers. And the effect hath ſo far anſwerd, that it is leſs by one Third than the Original Treatiſe. But then this Abbreviation hath not been made at all adventures, nor any one point, that I know of, rejected, which might be of Service for exciting Men to that* Holy Reſolution, *propoſed as the End of compoſing the whole. The Matters paſſed over being ſuch, as ſeemed either (1.) Superfluous, or (2.) Inſufficient, or (3.) Erroneous. And conſequently, nothing of the true weight is taken away by this proceeding, but the Argument remains more juſt, more unexceptionable, and more perfect, without them.*

1. *Under the* First *ſort, I comprehend ſeveral Prophecies out of the Old Teſtament, which do either not at all, or in a very remote Senſe, concern the Things, which this Author hath produced them in proof of: Several Quotations out of the ancient Fathers, the ſubſtance whereof is abundantly expreſs'd in thoſe which I have retained; Several Examples out of Eccleſaſtical Hiſtory, wherein the Virtues of Good, or the Puniſhments of Wicked and Obſtinate, Men are repreſented. And here I have generally contented my ſelf with ſuch Inſtances of each kind, as the Holy Scriptures have ſet before us. And indeed under all theſe Heads, care hath been taken to lay down the moſt direct and ſignificant Paſſages, after which the reſt might very well be ſpared, and which, (if any Thing will)*

will) might ſuffice for the Purpoſes that all of them were intended to ſerve.

2. To the Second may be referred thoſe Teſtimonies in favour of the Chriſtian Religion, which are taken from the Sibylline Oracles, and other Writings of ſuſpected Credit. Theſe I have but ſlightly mentioned, and ſo as to lay no particular ſtreſs upon them. It being a manifeſt injury to a Cauſe, which needs them not, when we produce Authorities juſtly queſtioned, where there is ſufficient Proof, from ſuch as are unconteſtable, to ſupport it againſt the Objections of any fair Adverſary.

3. The Third are chiefly concerned in the Chapters of Faith, Good Works, and Purgatory; wherein the Doctrines of the Romiſh Infallibility; Satisfaction by Penance, and Alms; and the temporal Puniſhment of Sins whoſe Eternal Puniſhment is remitted, are treated of, according to the Principles of this Father, and his Society. And herein I have caſt out what was peculiar to the Romiſh Communion, and reſerved ſo much only as might be ſuppoſed to come from the Pen of a Chriſtian Prieſt at large. This I foreſee is like to give greateſt offence to a ſort of Perſons, whoſe eagerneſs for a Party in Religion diſpoſes them to reſent it very heinouſly, that we ſhould pretend to enjoy the Advantage of what makes for Chriſtianity in common, without being content at the ſame time to ſwallow all that is interſperſed for the Intereſt of ſome particular denomination of Chriſtians. But I hope this will appear to be no unreaſonable way of proceeding, when we have attended a little to the two following Arguments.

Firſt, This Cavil ſeems to come very ungracefully from the Members of a Church, which hath given the Countenance of publick Authority to Indices Expurgatorij; Whoſe moſt eminent Champions have forged falſe, and preſs'd the true, Fathers into their Ser-

vice,

vice, by making ſome ſpeak who never broke Silence, and others ſay what they never meant, for maintaining a Cauſe too feeble to ſtand upon the Baſis of genuine and uncorrupted Writers. And there is a mighty difference, I take it, between modelling Antient and modern Authors; between making the One of a Party, and to vindicate Tenets which they knew nothing of, and the Other deliver only ſuch Things as all Chriſtians are unanimouſly agreed in. If F. Parſons *do not ſpeak here as a Papiſt, yet he is not made to ſpeak as a Proteſtant; that is, he ſays only ſuch Things, as ſuite a Good Chriſtian at large, whithout engaging in ſuch others, as diſtinguiſh him to be of any particular ſort, and relate to controverted Points, foreign to Practical Religion, and too evidently deſtructive of it. This for the Perſons objecting; and then,*

Secondly, *For the Objection it ſelf, if this Author have acquitted himſelf well in theſe Doctrines of univerſal allowance and uſe, why ſhould He be deprived of the Glory, or the World of the Benefit, of theſe, by ſeparating the Gold from the Droſs, and giving the Reader his Morality pure without the Allay of his Errours? I call them ſo, beeauſe they have been abundantly Proved ſo, by a great number of Treatiſes, unanſwered, and I verily believe, unanſwerable. And I leave them out, becauſe it ſeems to me a Thing much to be wiſhed, that They, who write for the Benefit of Religion and Chriſtians in common, would confine themſelves to thoſe Heads of Faith and Practice plainly deducible from Scripture, without perplexing the Vulgar Reader with the conteſted points of particular Communions. This would render ſuch Books of more general Advantage, and prejudice none againſt them, who are of a true Piety and Zeal, whatever their Education or Perſwaſion may have been, as to the leſs neceſſary and diſputed Matters. And I am not ſenſible of any Thing contained here, that ſhould give juſt ſcandal to*

any

any Good Christian of what Sect or Character soever.

It had been an easy, but I think, not so fair a way of proceeding, to have formed a general System of Faith and Manners, out of this Directory; *and have offered it under another name. Nay there want not several Treatises of this nature composed by Protestants; Nor need we, God be thanked, have recourse to any Church besides our own, for Directions how to believe and live as becomes us. But I was desirous, an Adversary should not be defrauded of the Reputation due to him; and the parts which are suppressed, I look'd upon as his Blemishes and Mistakes. The covering whereof, as it is an Act of Charity to the Reader; so I make no doubt, but* εἴτις αἴσθησις, *if the Souls departed have any Sense of what we are doing upon Earth, the Author esteems it a Good Office done to himself too. For we are mightily mistaken, if we imagin, that the Points for which Men of differing Opinions contend so eagerly here below, are of that Concern to the Blessed above, which they seem to Us. In those happy Regions, where perfect Peace, and Concord, Holiness, and Zeal for God's Glory, Reign, there is more Joy at the Conversion of one Sinner, more praise for the pious Labour of one little Tract, which makes Men good Livers, than for the winning Proselytes to this or that Communion (as distinct from the rest that disagree with it in less substantial Niceties) than for vast Volumes of subtle Disputants, which make for the Interest of any of those Factions, into which Christendom is so unfortunately divided.*

More a great deal might be said upon this Occasion; but thus much seems to me enough, for all who are rather desirous of Edification than Wrangling. Upon the whole, I am not conscious of any real Injustice done to the Original. And, Fame being not any of the Motives, which induced me to undertake this Work; I shall not be much concerned for the Reputation,

tion, but am very ſeriouſly ſo for the ſucceſs, of it. And therefore to my Endeavours I add my moſt hearty Prayers, that it may have the Good Effect, *which, by the aſſiſtance of God's Grace, I think it very capable of,* To turn Men from Darkneſs to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God; *that ſo true Religion may get ſome Ground (even by my poor Labours) in our degenerate Age, and both I, who would gladly contribute toward, and they who by this means come into, ſo truly Chriſtian a Deſign, may hereafter meet in the everlaſting Glory of our dear Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt.* Amen.

THE

A TREATISE Concerning Holy Reſolution.

CHAP. I.

The Miſchief and Danger of Inconſideration.

THE Goodneſs and great Compaſſion of God for the Souls of Men, among many other Inſtances, is eminently viſible in this, that he hath made choice of ſuch proper and likely methods of ſaving them. For the Prophets and Meſſengers ſent from time to time, to warn Sinners of their Danger, have not only reproved their paſt Wickedneſs, and foretold the diſmal Conſequences of it; but have likewiſe been careful to diſcover the cauſes of their Diſeaſe, and ſo to direct men how ſuch Inconveniences might be remedied, and ſuch Wickedneſs prevented for the time to come.

Now, of all the cauſes, which contribute either to the drawing men into Sin at firſt, or to confirming them in the Habits of it, or hardning them in it finally to their utter and eternal undoing; none is more general, none

more frequently charged in Scripture, than the want of Conſideration. Thus *Iſaiah* complains of his People; *The Ox knoweth his Owner, and the Aſs his Maſter's Crib*; *but* Iſrael *doth not know, my People doth not conſider*; and he denounces a Wo againſt them, for that *the Harp and Viol, the Tabret and Pipe, and Wine were in their Feaſts; but they regarded not the Work of the Lord, nor conſidered the operation of his Hands: Therefore my People* (ſays he) *are gone into Captivity, becauſe they have no Knowledge: Therefore Hell hath enlarged her ſelf, and opened her mouth without meaſure; and their Glory, and their Multitude, and their Pomp, and he that rejoyceth ſhall deſcend into it.* Thus Senſuality and Pleaſure brought theſe Men to Inconſideration, and Inconſideration brought them to the very brink of Hell; they periſhed by not attending to God's dealings with Sinners; and forgot thoſe Judgments in the heat of their Jollity, which afterwards they felt to the Manifeſtation of his Juſtice, in the Eyes of all the World; for ſo it follows, The *Lord of Hoſts ſhall be exalted in Judgment, and God that is Holy ſhall be ſanctified in Righteouſneſs.*

Iſai. 1. 3. & 5. 12, 13, 14. v. 16.

Nor was this *Iſaiah*'s complaint only, or the caſe of *Judah* or *Iſrael* alone, but all the other Prophets expreſs themſelves in like manner, concerning other States and Countries flouriſhing at that time, as *Babylon*, *Ægypt*, *Damaſcus*, *Tyre*, *Sidon* and *Moab*; all whoſe ſins and temporal Puniſhments were ſo many Figures, of ſenſual and ſinful Souls laid to ſleep, and led on blindfold to the Gates of Hell, by the like wretched careleſneſs; which never ſuffered them to ſee their own danger, till it was too late to prevent it.

For, what account but this, can we give of thoſe

thoſe many, who at this day, do, as *Job* ſays, *Drink iniquity like Water*, and (as St. *Paul*) *commit all uncleanneſs with greedineſs*, and ſeem to have loſt all remorſe of Conſcience for the moſt abominable, the moſt notorious Wickedneſs, but the ſame groſs affected Ignorance of God's Juſtice, and their own Condition? May we not to every ſuch Sinner apply that Lamentation of our Lord over *Jeruſalem?* If *thou didſt but know* what hangs over thy head for this careleſs Life of thine; if thou would'ſt at all reflect, what will be the End of theſe unlawful Pleaſures, it would damp all thy Delights, and put an effectual Check to ſuch deſtructive Indulgence. *But now theſe things are hidden from thine Eyes.* Luke, 19.

Not but that thou mighteſt have known them if thou would'ſt; but becauſe thou art one of them who ſay to the Almighty, *Depart from us, for we deſire not the Knowledge of thy ways*: That *will not underſtand nor ſeek after God*, that *turn away their Ears from hearing God's Law*; and conſequently one, not only whoſe Life, but whoſe very *Prayer*, is *an abomination* to thy Maſter and Maker. Job, 21. 14. Prov. 28. 9

And, what indeed can be more provoking than this contemptuous Behaviour? That the Majeſty of the great God ſhould publiſh a Law, with ſo ſtrict a Charge for us to learn and conſider it, to ſtudy and meditate upon it Day and Night, at home and abroad; when we ly down and when we riſe up; to make it our Diſcourſe, our Exerciſe, our Delight; and yet We, notwithſtanding all this, ſhould ſo ſlight that Law, as to allow it no place at all in our Thoughts, nay to decline the Knowledge of it with great Induſtry, as we ſee many do, for fear of creating diſturbance to their Conſciences.

Cauſes of Inconſideration.

1. For Wickedneſs, as the Wiſe man moſt truly obſerves, *is very timorous, being condemn'd by her own teſtimony*; this made St. *Paul*'s Diſcourſe of *Righteouſneſs*, and *Temperance*, and *Judgment* to come, agree ſo ill with *Felix*. He pretended indeed a deſire of hearing him further upon thoſe matters, when he ſhould have a more convenient Seaſon. But why that Seaſon never came, *Joſephus* may inform us; who ſays that *Felix* was a very wicked Man, that *Druſilla* was not really his, but another Perſon's Wife, from whom he had enticed, and brought her off from her Husband by violence; and therefore thoſe were tender points, and ſuch as *Felix* his Conſcience could by no means reliſh or digeſt. And I make no doubt, but one very common cauſe, why the men of this World ſo little conſider their Condition and their Duty; is from a fear, leſt they ſhould thus be brought to ſee and to condemn thoſe Faults, which they cannot prevail with themſelves to forſake, and therefore chooſe to continue inſenſible of.

Wiſd. 17. 11. Acts 24.

Joſeph. *Antiqu. l.* 20. *c.* 5.

2. A ſecond cauſe of Inconſideration the Scripture hath taken notice of, not much different from the former, which is, that of worldly men being totally immerſed in the Cares and Pleaſures of this Life, ſo that the thoughts of God, and their Spiritual Concerns, are utterly ſhut out; and thus the Soul hath no room left for her own proper buſineſs. Thus *Jeremy* complains, that after all his Preaching, *No man repented him of his wickedneſs*, ſaying, *What have I done?* but *Every one turned to his courſe, as the Horſe ruſheth into the Battel.* By which Compariſon the Holy Ghoſt gives us a lively Repreſentation of that eager fury, and greedineſs, with which men purſue the pleaſures or advantages of the preſent world,

Jerem. 8. 6

world, when their Affections are once ſet upon them, and how very hard it is to ſtop their obſtinate carrier, or recover them to a better mind and ſenſe of things.

3. A third ſort of Inconſideration there is, which proceeds neither from a ſettled purpoſe to do ill, nor from any great engagements which divert men from doing better, but rather from a certain Levity and unthinking Temper of mind, which troubles it ſelf with nothing that is ſerious and weighty, but *Accounts Life a Paſtime*, and ſeeks nothing above Recreation: Theſe Men are as full of ſecurity, as highly contented with themſelves, as though they had all the good works of the beſt men, to produce in their Juſtification. And this is the very extremity of Vanity and Deluſion. For, as in the affairs of this World, that Merchant would be accuſed of great folly, who ſhould never inſpect his Accounts of Profit and Loſs; and that Maſter or Pilot were deſervedly condemned, who minded nothing but Feaſting on board, and in the mean while ſuffered his Veſſel to drive, whereſoever Wind and Tide ſhould carry her: So much more, in the buſineſs of the Soul, is he chargeable with folly, and madneſs, who refuſes the trouble of Conſideration and Care; becauſe the Damage and Calamity conſequent upon ſuch neglect, is much more dreadful, and unretrievable, than any temporal loſs can poſſibly be. For alas! there will come a time, when ſuch men muſt ſee and underſtand their miſery, whether they will or no. Even then when as the Prophet ſays, *The whirlwind of the Lord goeth forth with fury, and it ſhall fall with pain upon the head of the Wicked, in the latter days they ſhall conſider it.* Jerem. 30. 23, 24.

Now the Conſideration I would exhort men to, is not every cold or ſlight thought, but ſuch an ardent and earneſt application of mind, as anſwers the weighty purpoſes about which it is to be employed. It is ſuch a Thoughtfulneſs as firſt and principally looks to the State of our own Soul; no man is truly Wiſe, who is not wiſe for himſelf. All Wiſdom and Knowledge without this, though otherwiſe never ſo profound and large, is a Building without a Foundation. All Conſideration ſhould begin and end in our ſelves. And if this might have due place in the world, few Souls would be loſt. Our Lord commends the unjuſt Steward, for his prudent foreſight of that Poverty, which he ſaw approaching, when he ſhould be called to Account, and put out of his Maſter's Service. And from thence we may eaſily gather, how much more grateful it would be to our great Maſter in Heaven, if We, who are Stewards of his Talents in this Life, would ſeriouſly conſider our preſent Eſtate, and make a wiſe Proviſion for the Time, or rather for that vaſt Eternity to come.

Luke, 16.

And if this matter were rightly ſtated, I cannot but think the two main Inlets to Perdition or Salvation hereafter, are *Conſideration* and *Inconſideration*. Should we ask moſt of thoſe unhappy Spirits, now doom'd to everlaſting Miſery, what was the original of their Ruin and Torment, they would anſwer *Inconſideration*. For ſo the Wiſe man introduces them ſpeaking, *We Fools counted the Good man's Life madneſs*; which is in effect to confeſs, that they never conſidered his or their own Converſation before. Again, if we enquire of the Bleſſed in Heaven, what was the firſt ſtep to their Converſion

Wiſd. 5.

verſion in this World, and from that to their Happineſs in the other; they would tell us, it was ſome Pious Thought well improved, and cloſely followed while upon Earth. *I thought upon my own ways*, ſays David, *and turned my feet unto thy Teſtimonies.* And oh! How happy, how ſeaſonable was that Thought, which wrought ſo Bleſſed a Change, and thereby gained a Crown of Eternal Glory! Pſal. 119.

SECT. I.

That Conſideration muſt deſcend to particulars.

BY this you ſee, of how great uſe and efficacy Conſideration is to our amendment in this, and our Salvation in the next World. The Prophet *Ezekiel* indeed makes it the beginning of all our Virtue, and the forſaking of all our Vice. For having ſhewed at large, that every one ſhall bear his own burden, and that each ſhall dye for thoſe Sins only which himſelf commits: He acquaints us by what means it is, that a bad man becomes good; declaring, that the *Penitent ſhall ſave his Soul alive*; Why? Even *becauſe he conſidereth, and turneth away from all his Tranſgreſſions.* Which is an Expreſſion very Emphatical, and intimates, that none but they who do not *Conſider*, will continue in a wicked courſe, and ſo periſh everlaſtingly. Ezek. 18.

The wicked Lives of Chriſtians can hardly be imputed to any other Cauſe, than either Infidelity, or Inconſideration; and ſince we cannot reaſonably ſuſpect the *Firſt*, the Charge will lie upon the *Second*. That is; Men believe in general, that there is a God; that he rewards

the Good, and puniſhes the Evil; that there is a Heaven, and a Hell; and a Judgment to come, and the like; but they never enter far into theſe matters, nor apply them to their own caſe in particular; nor trouble themſelves to think, which of theſe is like to be their own Portion; and ſo the Doctrines, thus looſly entertained, have no effect upon their Lives and Actions, which is the true reaſon, why they live in ſuch Inconſiſtence with their Profeſſion. For, though the Articles of our Belief be of themſelves moſt forcible Motives to Piety and Virtue, yet if the Powers of the Mind be not exerciſed upon them, if they be not diligently looked into, frequently contemplated, and warmly applyed, the Virtue they have will not exert it ſelf, but remain as void of effect, as the moſt Sovereign Medicines, whoſe greateſt Excellence can have no ſucceſs, unleſs the Patient take them, and the Drugs mingle and Incorporate with his Blood and Humours. An Example or two will make this matter plain.

How few are there, who do not believe they ſhall dye, and after Death be Judged, yea, and be damned if they Live and Die in their Sins? And yet how few are there, who live as if they believed theſe things? And whence is this? Becauſe they believe theſe things looſly and in general Terms, but never bring them home to themſelves. The man believes he ſhall Dye, but he does not conſider when, nor where; not how ſhortly, nor how miſerably he may Dye, and ſo he is not affected with that thought. But did he look upon Death as a thing ready at hand, that he were now juſt at the point of it, and could no longer eſcape; did he reflect what condition he ſhould be in at that laſt hour,

what

what grief, what fears, what pangs he ſhould endure in the painful Paſſage; what a diſmal State of Horrour awaits him afterwards; and that, not for a year, or two, or twenty, or a Thouſand, or a Million, but for all Eternity; that he is this moment ready to be laid in his Coffin and his Grave, there to be gnawed and devoured by Worms, and never more to appear in Fleſh, but at the great Day of Univerſal Judgment; he that conſidered theſe things ſeriouſly, and purſued the thought, and ſpent ſome time in it; and imagined Death and Judgment preſent; (for here is the fatal Deceit, that a few Years, nay ſometimes a few Months or Days, are eſteemed a great diſtance of time;) this Man would feel himſelf moved after another manner, than he is only by talking of the matter in general. He would find ſome good degree of *David*'s warmth, when *the Fire kindled* within, and would, I doubt not, reap the ſame good Effects of it, by *taking heed to his ways*, and reſolving *not to offend in his Tongue.* Pſal. 39.

But, becauſe we think not at all, or but ſeldom and very ſlightly of theſe matters, therefore theſe Principles are without any Profit entertained by us. We are as Men that have Souls, and know them not; Underſtanding, and uſe it not; Memory, and remember not themſelves, and their own greateſt Good and Evil; Wills and Affections, but apply them not, except to Trifles and Vanities: In ſhort, as Men quite beſides themſelves, Stupid, Aſleep, and Dead, for want of the Life and Spirit, of true and active Conſideration. Which is the greateſt folly we can poſſibly be guilty of; the heavieſt Calamity that ever can befall us.

Since then Conſideration is ſo profitable, ſo neceſſary

neceſſary a thing, I thought fit to begin with urging and recommending this as a requiſite preparation for the following parts of this Treatiſe. For without this, neither any thing I have ſaid already, nor all I ſhall or can ſay, will have any Effect at all. We find by daily Woful experience, how many Millions of Men are not one whit the better, for ſo many good Books, ſo many excellent Sermons, ſo many Virtuous Examples, ſo many terrible Chaſtiſements upon Sinners, as every day preſents them with. They want either the Will, or the Leiſure; they dare not, or they have not the Grace to conſider them; but paſs over all with neglect and diſdain, and labour to divert their Eyes, and Ears, and Thoughts with objects grateful to Fleſh and Senſe; and drive away all ſuch Reflections as would give them any (though it were a moſt profitable) preſent Uneaſineſs.

But, ſince as the Prophet *Jeremy* hath forewarned us, we ſhall one day be compelled to ſee, and conſider theſe things, when it will be too late to reap any Benefit by our Knowledge; how much better were it for every Man to do that by Choice to his Salvation and unſpeakable Comfort, which he elſe muſt do by Force, without any advantage, and with inexpreſſible Grief and Remorſe? Let us then take St. *Paul*'s advice; *Redeeming the time*, and not running headlong with the World into deſtruction. Let us ſtop a little, and ask our ſelves, what we do, whither we are going, and where all this will end at laſt. Borrow ſome time at leaſt from thy Mirth, and thy Company, from thy Pleaſures and thy Buſineſs; for this well employed, would make thee

Eph. 5. 16.

thee good amends, and give thee Cauſe of Joy and Laughter, when thy jolly Friends, who refuſe the like Conſideration, may perhaps mourn and weep without Hope or Comforter.

And for the promoting and aſſiſting thee in this good Work, I have put into thy hands the following Conſiderations: The Sum of all, which may be reduced to two Heads, the Knowledge of God, and of our Selves. *This is Life Everlaſting*, (ſays our Bleſſed Saviour) *to know thee the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt, whom thou haſt ſent*, that is, ſuch a Knowledge of God, as the Chriſtian Religion teaches us. And from hence we ſhall learn to know our Selves too; for as in Philoſophy one Contrary tends to the Illuſtration of another, ſo here the Knowledge of Almighty God, and his moſt eminent Perfections, leads us by a reflex act to know our ſelves, our own Infirmities, and Frailty, and extream Vileneſs. Joh. 17. 3.

Now the Nature and Eſſence of God, is a Knowledge too excellent to be attained in this Life: And therefore all we can reach to here, is to know him by his Attributes and Perfections: His Majeſty, and Mercy, and Judgments: His Hatred againſt Sin, and Love to Good Men; his Benefits and Promiſes to all Mankind; his Grace, his Will, his Commandments, his Threatnings, his Dealings with others that have gone before us; to what end he Created and placed us in this World; what Duties we are obliged to, what Helps we have toward the performing them, and what hinderances we muſt be careful to avoid; all which the following Chapters ſet before us, and ſo teach us to know God and our

ſelves

ſelves aright. Read then, Chriſtian Brother, but read not haſtily, or for meer Curioſity: The matter requires Attention, and Leiſure, and diligent Application; it is the weightieſt thou canſt poſſibly take in hand, the very ſame which Chriſt hath called the *One thing needful*, and all other things in this World, when put into the Ballance with it, are in compariſon as nothing, altogether Lighter than Vanity it ſelf. Reflect then, how careful thou wouldſt be in the examining the Writings and Evidences of a Mortgage, or Eſtate; and be not leſs ſollicitous to ſecure a Treaſure of much greater value; for be aſſured, that the Importance of what thou art now going about, is no leſs, than either thy Life or Death Everlaſting.

CHAP. II.

That there is a God, rewarding Good and Evil.

IT is uſual in all other Arts and Sciences, to lay down ſome Principles without any proof, and to take them for granted; becauſe they are ſuch, as either the Learner is preſumed to know before, or elſe are ſo plain and ſelf-evident, that the mention of them alone makes them ſufficiently underſtood.

The Apoſtle intimates to us, that the ſame Method obtains in Divinity too. For by ſaying,

Heb 11.6. *He that cometh to God muſt believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him:* He ſuppoſes Two Principles, in which a Man

Man muſt be ſatisfied, before he can ſeek or draw near to God. The Firſt is the Exiſtence, the Second the Juſtice, of God; that he *is*, and that he *is a Rewarder*.

And theſe indeed are Principles, ſo evident in themſelves, and which ſeem ſo wrought into the frame of every Man's mind, that, were not the Wickedneſs of the Age we live in loſt to all Shame, it were not only needleſs, but a ſort of affronting the ſober ſenſe of Mankind, to begin a Chriſtian Tract with the Proof of theſe two Points. But, ſince Impiety hath ſo lift up her head, as not only to offend and deſpiſe, but even to deny, our Maker, the better to countenance Sin, and to ſtifle the Worm of Conſcience; I am under a neceſſity of beating Men from this deſperate Refuge; by laying before them the inconteſtable Evidence of theſe Two Truths. Which have ſo cloſe a dependence upon each other, that if the *firſt* be proved, the *ſecond* plainly follows. For admitting, that there is a God, whoſe Providence governs and takes care of all whom he hath created, the Conſequence is not to be avoided, that he is concerned to recompence the ſame perſons, according as they ſhall have deſerved well or ill at his hands.

Firſt then, for Proof of this Principle, *That there is a God*, I need only refer Men to their own Senſe and Reaſon; and deſire them to look upon the World, where God hath drawn himſelf as it were, in Images ſo lively, and imprinted ſo many, ſo legible, Characters of his Perfections, that the plaineſt Man alive may read and underſtand them. Hence it is, that the Wiſe Man long ſince complained of the extreme Folly of thoſe *vain people, who continued ignorant of God*, and *could not out of the good things* Wiſd. 13. 1, 5.

that

that are ſeen, know Him that is, nor by conſidering the Works acknowledge the Work-maſter: Since by the Greatneſs and Beauty of the Creatures proportionably the Maker of them is ſeen. Hence St. *Paul* Rom. 1. 20. tells the *Romans*, that *the inviſible things of God are clear from the Creation of the World, even his eternal Power and Godhead, ſo that they were without excuſe.* Theſe, like a Ray of Light ſhining into a dark place through a ſmall Chink, lead us to that Sun, from whence this Beam deſcends. And, if a Man, caſt upon ſome foreign barbarous Shore, where no living Creature but Beaſts appear, would upon the ſight of ſome exquiſite Building, make no difficulty to conclude, that ſome Man had been there, becauſe a Creature void of Reaſon could never have finiſhed ſo artful a Compoſition: Shall we behold this World, a Work ſo full of Wonder, and not confeſs a wiſe Artificer, who fram'd it with ſuch aſtoniſhing Order and Art? Can we lift up our Eyes to the Heavens, that Sky of vaſt extent, that Ornament of Stars and Planets innumerable, thoſe Motions ſo different, ſo unequal, and yet ſo regular, as not to change their Courſe, or ever to obſtruct Pſal. 19. 1. each other, and not confeſs with *David*, that *the Heavens declare the Glory of God, and the Firmament ſheweth his handy work*? Can we deſcend to this Earth, on which we dwell, and obſerve the Bulk, the Beauty, the Variety of it, its Mountains and Valleys, its gay Cloathing of Graſs, and Herbs, and Flowers; the Rivers which run like Blood in the Veins of this huge Body, the Riches of its Fruits, the ſtrangeneſs of its Situation, hung like a Ball in the midſt of the Air, without Pillar or Baſis, and not ask our ſelves that queſtion,

Who

Who hath laid the meaſures thereof, or who hath ſtretched the Line upon it? Whereupon are its foundations faſtned, or who laid the Corner Stone thereof? Can we once more obſerve the Sea, which begirds this dry Land round about, that Scene of more Wonders than Tongue can expreſs, that Gulf into which all Rivers are perpetually Flowing, always full and yet never running over, that reſtleſs Ebb and Flood of contending Waters, that dreadful raging Element, that Swells, and Roars, and threatens to devour and ſwallow up the Earth at once: And, though it be Situated above it, and makes daily Aſſaults upon it, yet ſuddenly recoils from its appointed Borders, where there is nothing to check or dam it up; can we I ſay obſerve all this, and not Reflect, as God inſtructs *Job*, *Who ſhut up the Sea with Doors, when it brake forth as out of the Womb? I eſtabliſhed for it my decreed place, I have ſet Bars and Doors, I have ſaid, hitherto ſhalt thou come, but no further, and here ſhall thy proud Waves be ſtayed.* Job, 38. 5, 6. Ch. 38. 8, 10, 11.

This Evidence we have from things without us, but if we would ſeek God nearer home, we cannot fail to find him within our own Selves. Every part of theſe Bodies are ſo many Miracles preaching their Maker to us. And when St. *Paul* ſpeaks to the *Athenians*, of ſeeking *the Lord, if happily they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us, for in Him we Live, and Move, and have our Being*; his meaning is, that by conſidering the works of God, and eſpecially the wonders of humane Nature, we may come to ſo clear a perception of God, as even in ſome ſort to be ſaid to feel and Acts, 17. 27, 28.

handle

handle him. So jointly do all things concur to the Manifeſtation of their Maker; ſo effectually do they demonſtrate, and Copy out, to us their great Original. Nothing is ſo little, as not to declare his Greatneſs; nothing ſo great, as not to confeſs its Subjection to this Sovereign Lord; nothing ſo low, as not to lead us up to his Majeſty; nothing ſo high, as not to deſcend to our Capacities for teaching us this Truth.

It were endleſs and needleſs to produce all that might be alledged in confirmation of this Principle: A Principle ſo evident, that no Man of Learning ever ſtood out againſt it; but all Conſidering Perſons, in all Ages and Places, have been driven by the manifeſt Evidence of Truth, to own, *That there is a God.* If it be Objected, that we have ſome inſtances in Story, of Men who openly diſavowed this Belief; I anſwer, that ſome of thoſe were ſcandalouſly ignorant and ſenſual, rather to be reckoned among Beaſts than Men; and that others of better underſtanding did not ſo much deny the Being of one true God, as expoſe the vanities of Pagan Idolatry, and refute the many falſe Gods then worſhipped by the Common People.

Diog. Laer. *l.* 2. *c.* 4.

But the Truth is, moſt of thoſe reputed *Atheiſts* did not deny God in Opinion, ſo much as in Fact: They were Men of ſenſuality and Sin, whoſe *God was their Belly*, and their Pleaſure; and therefore ſuch, as St. *Paul* ſays, *Live without God in the World.* And yet theſe very Perſons, ſo loth to confeſs God in their better Circumſtances, in times of Diſtreſs, and at the approach of Death, were as forward in acknowledging and calling upon him for

Phil. 3. 19. Eph. 2. 12.

Lactant. Inſtit. *lib.* 3.

for help, as any other People whatſoever. But for Men of Judgment, and Learning, and Sobriety, whether they were *Jews* or *Gentiles*, They never had any doubt of this matter, diſcerned abundant evidence for it; Such particularly as I ſhall now produce in the following parts of this Chapter.

SECT. II.

The Arguments by which the Heathens proved, that there is a God.

THE moſt Eminent for Learning and Judgment among the Heathens, were thoſe Perſons commonly called Philoſophers. Of which there were *Four* principal ſorts, diſtinguiſhed by the ſeveral ſorts of Science they profeſs'd. Theſe were the *Natural*, the *Moral*, the *Metaphyſick*, and *Mathematick*. The *Three* former have each their proper Proofs for the Exiſtence of God. The *Fourth*, not concerning it ſelf with efficient and final Cauſes, (under which two Reſpects only God is Knowable to Humane reaſon) hath no Proofs peculiar to it ſelf, but borroweth from the other *Three*.

Among other Infinite Arguments to this purpoſe, Natural Philoſophy inſiſts upon theſe *Three*, as the Principal Heads to which the Reſt are reducible. *Motion*, the *Final*, and the *Efficient Cauſe*, the Force whereof may appear by the following Examples.

That taken from Motion proceeds upon this Axiom, *That whatſoever is moved is moved by ſomething elſe*: And in Motion this is farther obſervable, that one thing moves in ſubor-

dination to another. And here the old Philoſophers thought theſe Sublunary Bodies moved by the influence of the Heavenly, and thoſe again by the higheſt Orb of all, called therefore the *Firſt Moveable*: beyond which they could go no farther among created Beings.

The Queſtion then is, Who moves this *Firſt Moveable*? To ſay, it moves it ſelf, is againſt the Axiom laid down before; to ſay it is moved by ſome other, not only contradicts it's being the *Firſt*, but brings back the ſame Queſtion, *Who Moves that?* And this Difficulty muſt remain, till you come to ſomething which moves it ſelf, and is not moved by another. But this muſt be ſomething above created Nature, and is that which we call *God*. This was eſteemed a Demonſtration, and illuſtrated by *Plato* and *Ariſtotle* by the inſtance of a Clock, where the Hammer ſtriking ſhews the next Wheel, and that the next, and ſo from one to another through the whole Engine, till at laſt the Motion of all the Wheels be reſolved into the Clock-Maker himſelf. The Conſent and Subordination of this Motion is compared by *Ariſtotle* to a Quire, where the *Præcentor* gives the Key, and the reſt ſtrike in with their reſpective Parts, to make one perfect Harmony. And thus God in the Creation is ſuppoſed to have ſet the *Firſt Moveable* going, That, to have communicated the Motion thus received to all other Bodies; which ever ſince continue to move in ſuch Order, and Concord, as is convenient for the Preſervation and good Government of the whole Maſs. And thus a God is proved from Motion.

Plat. *de* Leg. *l.* 10 Ariſtot. Phyſ. *l.* 8. *Ch.* 5.

Ariſt. *de Mundo.*

That

That of the *Final Cauſe* ſtands thus. Experience ſhews, that every Creature is by Nature appointed to aim at ſome End: (As the Bird in Building her Neſt, and the Fox in making his Den, and the like.) Now the Enquiry ariſing from hence is, Who appoints and directs that Nature, which directs each particular Creature. And this is not Capable of any other Anſwer, than, that Nature is directed by ſomething above it. And that which is Superiour to Nature is no other than God.

Philo. de *Opificio Mundi.*

Then for the *Efficient Cauſe*; the Corruptions, Alterations, and perpetual Motions of Created Beings, argue them to have had a Beginning. And no Philoſopher but *Ariſtotle* ever diſagreed to this Principle; nay, even He Relinquiſhed his ſingular Opinion of the World's Eternity, and Confeſſed the contrary at laſt, in his Book to *Alexander*. Now whatever had a Beginning muſt have an *Efficient Cauſe*. It could not make it ſelf, for that is to give it a Power before it was, and to ſuppoſe it to be, and not to be, at the ſame Time. The Whole could not be made by any part of it ſelf: This is yet more Abſurd; and we may as well pretend, that the Finger made the Body, before it was a Finger or part of the Body. Hence then it follows, that ſomething more excellent than the whole World, or any part of it, made the World; and that Being, more excellent than the whole World, and the Maker of it, is but another Name for *God*. Such convincing Arguments does Reaſon, and the Contemplation of meer Nature furniſh, for the Exiſtence of God, abſtracted from all the Light and aſſiſtance of Revelation and Faith.

Plutar. *de* Plac. Phil. Ariſt. Phy. *L.* 8. *de* Gen. & Cor. 1. Ariſtot. & Plot in. *de Mundo.*

The Metaphyſician pretends to Treat of Higher and more Abſtracted Matters, and therefore the Subject before us falls more properly under his Conſideration, and He hath greater Variety of Arguments to prove it by.

1. *Firſt*, then He tells you, that every Finite Being, muſt needs proceed from ſomething elſe, which ſets thoſe Bounds and Limits, in which the Finiteneſs of it's Nature conſiſts. And ſince, in this World there is not any thing which is not ſo Bounded, we muſt of neceſſity admit ſome Infinite Maker, who limited theſe Creatures at Pleaſure, as a Potter frames the Veſſels, turned by him, in Shapes and Proportions, agreeable to his Fancy, and to the Uſes he intends them for. *Whatever is by Participation*, he ſays, *muſt be referred to ſomething which is not by Participation, but of it ſelf.* Now thoſe things are ſaid to be by Participation, which have not the utmoſt degree of Perfection, but are capable of Addition or Increaſe. But all the Creatures and parts of the World are thus. They are Finite in their Nature, they have only a Limited Perfection, they may have Additions made to them; therefore they muſt be all reſolved into ſome Infinite and abſolutely Perfect Cauſe, ſubſiſting of it ſelf; and this is God. For He only is of Endleſs Perfection, and from that unexhauſtible Store Communicates to his Creatures their reſpective Perfections; which are but ſo many little Particles of his own, and are to be referred thither at laſt, like Beams of Light to the Sun, or Rivulets to their Common Source.

2. It is another Principle in this Science, That

That *All Multitude and Diſtinction proceeds from Unity.* The Motions of the lower Orbs come from the moving of that One Higheſt of all; the innumerable Rays of Light from one Sun; many Boughs from one Stock; the Veins, and Arteries, and Nerves, from one general Trunk common to each: The Infinite Operations of Reaſon, and Senſe, Generation and Corruption, Digeſtion and Nouriſhment, and ten Thouſand Particular Actions and Motions, different in their Kind, admirable in their Order, didinct in their Offices, All take their Beginning from one moſt ſimple and indiviſible Subſtance, the Soul; which produces, and Governs, and Directs them all, in their innumerable, different, and contrary, Functions. And if this be the Caſe of each particular Creature with it's reſpective Unity, the whole Creation, (which conſiſts of ſo many Millions of Multitudes and their Unities,) muſt in all Reaſon be referred to one moſt Simple and Abſtracted Unity, which gave beginning to them all; and This is God.

3. This is urged again from that Subordination of the Creatures, whereby each plainly ſerves others, and all conſpire together for the Common Good. Thus the Heavens move without ceaſing, but not for themſelves; the Water moiſtens, the Air cools and cheriſhes, the Sun warms, the Moon and Stars ſhed their Influence, the Wind refreſhes, the Earth receives theſe Benefits, not for her own Convenience, but to bring forth Food; She feeds Cattle, and They feed Man. Imagine then a well appointed Army, in Rank and File, all moving one Way, turning together, mutually aſſiſting one another

in ſome Common Deſign; and, if it would be Abſurd to think this Union and Agreement did not proceed from Order, Diſcipline, and Obedience to ſome Commander in Chief; learn from hence the Prodigious Folly, of ſuppoſing the much more Wonderful Conſent and Subordination of the Creatures, not to proceed from the diſpoſal of ſome Wiſe and Univerſal Governour, and Creator, who appoints to each it's Task and Station, by the Obſervance whereof the Safety and common Advantage of the Whole, is thus regularly Conſulted.

4. A *Fourth* Reaſon to this purpoſe is, That marvellous and inimitable Art and Forecaſt, that Order and Uſefulneſs, that Beauty and Proportion, obſervable in every the leaſt part, of even the leaſt, and, in common Eſteem, moſt Deſpicable, Creature.

Inſomuch, that if all the World ſhould lay their Heads together, they could not with their utmoſt Contrivance make a Gnat, or a Flea, or a Leaf of a Tree. Such Proportion of Parts, ſuch Variety of Colours, ſuch Diſtinction of Offices, ſuch Correſpondence of Inſtruments; and all theſe ſo fitted, ſo nicely framed to ſerve each other, that there are more Miracles than Members, and the more you Contemplate, the more you will ſtand Amazed. This could never be the Work of Chance, as *Lucretius* fondly imagined, for Chance proceeds not by Rule, and Method, and Certainty: Such Productions ſo far exceeding not only the Skill, but even the Comprehenſion, of the Wiſeſt Man, declare a Provident and Powerful Artificer; This Argument converted *Galen*, and forbad

De uſu Par. L. 3.

his

his irreligious purpoſe of aſcribing the praiſe of ſuch Workmanſhip to Nature any longer. This made a Heathen Platonick after long ſearch into theſe Matters cry out, *I will praiſe God in what I underſtand, and will admire him in what I do not. For I often do things for which my Servants conceive no Reaſon; and I ſee Children deſpiſe Jewels, and burn good Books, meerly becauſe they have not Capacity enough to underſtand the true worth of them.* And indeed, nothing is a more effectual means, to inſpire us with the Love and Admiration of our Great Creator, than a frequent Contemplation of his Works. That Heart muſt be prodigiouſly Hard and Stupid, that can exerciſe it ſelf in theſe, without feeling ſtrong and laſting Impreſſions of Religion left behind. Plor. *de* Prov.

5. One Argument more under this Topick is the Immortality of the Soul; a thing generally received from the Antients, upon the Account of it's being an Immaterial Subſtance, and Independent upon the State of our Mortal Body. And this appears, from it's being often more vigorous in Age, and Sickneſs, more Active and Clear, and Pregnant in Feeble and decaying People, than it ever was in time of Youth, or when the Conſtitution and Health was ſoundeſt. Thus again it was believed Immortal, and Immaterial, from it's eager and inſatiable Thirſt after Wiſdom and Knowledge, and never being contented with Bodily Pleaſures, or any other Senſible Object. From whence the Philoſopher inferred, that ſome other Satisfaction is prepared for this Soul in another State, and that ſo Excellent, that all Wiſdom, and Knowledge,

and Beauty, and whatſoever creates Love, and Joy, and Content, ſhall be her Portion, wherein She ſhall Delight and Reſt her Self for ever. Now if the Soul be Immortal, he that made it muſt be ſo; and to that Maker it muſt return, after it's Departure out of this Body. Which ſeems to be the true Meaning of that Old Doctrine, concerning the Common *Soul of the World*; from whence ſome Philoſophers held all Particular Souls to come, like Sparks from the Fire, or Rays from the Sun; and at their Separation to be Reunited to, and remain with that general Soul, to all Eternity. All which comes very near to that of the Preacher, *The Spirit ſhall return to God, who gave it.* And thus much ſhall ſuffice for the Metaphyſical Proofs of a God.

Themiſt. *de Anima.* Plutar. *de* Placit. Philoſ.

Eccleſ. 12. 7.

I have reſerved thoſe of Moral Philoſophy for the laſt Place, becauſe they are Plainer and Eaſier than the former, and lye more Level to the Capacity of the Mean and Unlearned Reader.

1. The *Firſt* of theſe is that Natural Inclination and Diſpoſition, even in the worſt of Men, to confeſs ſome Divine Power. This is evident from the Conſent and Practice even of the rudeſt and moſt barbarous Countreys; from the common way of lifting up Mens Eyes and Hands to Heaven in times of Diſtreſs, or Surpriſe; nay, even from the Confeſſion of Atheiſts themſelves, when under any grievous Calamity, or at the approach of Death, as *Seneca* declares; and the Example of *Caligula* ſhews, that ſuch are moſt fearful of an Avenging Power in their Miſery. Which could not be, if Nature and Conſcience did not force

force the Senſe of a God upon them. This laſt is ſo ſubſtantial a Proof, that *Zeno* preferred the Confeſſion of an Atheiſt, before the Diſputes of the moſt Learned Philoſophers. Becauſe Men in Extremity ſpeak the true Senſe of their Souls, and have put off that Vanity, and Ambition, that Hypocriſie, and Diſſembling, which they uſed in oppoſing a Deity before, when Health and Proſperity, Liberty and Wantonneſs had emboldned them.

From hence the Moraliſt advances to the Proof of *One only God*; for God muſt be Infinite; and Infinite but One can be, Two cannot ſtand together; Infinite can admit of no Rival, no Equal. That this Unity was received by the Heathens, he argues, with *Lactantius*, from their addreſſing to one God, in their Oaths, Imprecations, Prayers, and Solemn Wiſhes; eſpecially when Vehement, and in any Affliction. That, though the Learned and more Judicious, complyed with the Vulgar Errors, yet *Plato* makes it a Mark of his being ſerious, that he then mentions God in the ſingular Number. That *Socrates*, pronounced by the Oracle the Wiſeſt Man in all *Greece*, was put to Death for expoſing the Multitude of the Heathen Gods. *Ariſtotle* reſolves all into *One Father of Gods and Men*, the Creator and Preſerver of all Things, and ſays, the Plurality of Gods was invented, only to expreſs the different Powers and Perfections of this *One God*, by the variety of his Benefits and Miniſters: ſo that he makes all Gods but One to be Servants. *Zeno* urged, that *either there is one God or no God*. *Plutarch*, and *Seneca*, and *Epictetus*, affirm, that there is One God; that this God governs, and his Providence is over all; and lay this down for the firſt and Fundamental

Inſtit. *L.* 2. *C.* 2.

Ep. 13. *ad Dionyſ.*

De Mund. *Inſtin. in* Apolog.

mental Article of Reaſon and Morality. In ſhort, he who deſires farther ſatisfaction in this Point, may find it in St. *Cyril*'s Book againſt *Julian* the Apoſtate; and *Lactantius* his Firſt and Second Books againſt the Gentiles. And thus the Moraliſts *Firſt* Argument is ſupported by the Inſtinct of Nature, the Force of Conſcience, the Cuſtom of all Nations, the Conſent of all Wiſe Men, agreeing in a God, and in One only, who made and governs the World.

2. The *Second* is taken from the Ultimate End or chief Good of Man. Which is a Conſideration peculiar to moral Philoſophy; In regard that Science, undertaketh to lead Men to that End, for which thy were Created, the utmoſt Happineſs they are capable of, to which they tend in this Life, and in which they reſt without farther proſpect or deſire, when once they have obtained it. In order to our underſtanding this matter, we are to obſerve, that Philoſophers thought every thing to have ſome particular End, and a conſtant appetite and tendency to that End. This in Inanimate Creatures they defined to be thoſe Motions and Operations to which Nature determined them; in Brutes the Gratification of their Senſes: But in Man, who is by Reaſon diſtinguiſhed from Brutes, ſome Higher and more Excellent Object. For, ſince we feel by experience, that our Mind is oftentimes not quiet, even when our Senſes are fully ſatisfied; this argues Senſual Delight not to be that Chief Good, in which our Soul can reſt and enjoy it's perfect Felicity. Hence grew thoſe infinite Diſputes, and various Opinions, concerning the final Felicity of Mankind: But *Plato*, upon a full examination of the matter declared, that nothing in this Life could be

In *Phædon*

our

our chief Good; becauſe he was able to demonſtrate, that none of thoſe things pitched upon by Philoſophers, could ſatisfie the Deſires of the Humane Soul: Not Riches, for theſe are uncertain, mutable and vain; and often involve us in more danger and trouble than Poverty. Not Honours, for theſe are equally vain and inconſtant, and depend upon the Humour and Breath of others. Not bodily Pleaſures, for theſe are common to us with Beaſts, and leave a ſtrong and nauſeous diſreliſh behind them. Not Moral Virtues, for theſe conſiſt in a perpetual conflict with our Paſſions, which are Eternally diſturbing our Repoſe: In ſhort, whatever we fix upon here, it fails us, it yields no laſting ſatisfaction in this Life, and therefore we muſt be content to wait for our compleat Happineſs in a Life to come. So that Reaſon and Morality could go thus far, that Men cannot be perfectly happy in this preſent State: Nay, theſe prove, that this Happineſs of the Soul, in the life to come, muſt be a Spiritual and Immaterial Object; becauſe the Soul is a Spirit, and that it muſt be Immortal, becauſe the Soul it ſelf is ſo. And, which is yet more ſurpriſing, and gives *Plato* a Right to be called *Divine*, he tells us, *it conſiſts in being inſeparably united to God: This is the Sum and Complement, the utmoſt Aim and End of all Bleſſedneſs.* What could any Chriſtian ſay more? And yet a Heathen Scholar of *Plato's* explains his Maſter thus, *The ultimate end of Man is his Sovereign Good, and that is no other than God.* So that even Pagans could prove and find out God, by the conſideration of the chief Good of Man, which was the *Second* Argument I propounded, to prove the Exiſtence of a Deity, under this Head of moral Philoſophy. The

Plat. Phæd.

Plotin. Enn. 1. L. 4. c. 1.

3. The *Third*, and laſt I ſhall mention, is deduced from Virtue and Vice, and the Rewards and Puniſhments, by Nature, Equity and Reaſon, due to theſe. For, as in all other Acts and Effects of our Great Creator, we can plainly diſcern Proportion and Order, Juſtice and Wiſdom, and a careful Providence; ſo we may be aſſured, theſe Meaſures will be kept more eſpecially in his dealings with Man, the Beſt and Firſt of all his other Creatures in this lower World.

Now other Creatures, we plainly perceive, are directed by Nature to their proper Ends, and while they hold this Courſe, they are as happy as their Capacity will admit; but, when they deviate from that, Damage, and Sorrow, and Loſs is their Portion. Man only hath Reaſon to know and judge what he ought to aim at, and freedom of choice to purſue this by Virtue, or ſwerve from it by Vice. Equity then and Juſtice require, that they, who go the right way by living well, ſhould be rewarded with Happineſs, and attaining their true end; and that thoſe who abandon it for Senſual and Sinful Pleaſures, ſhould be puniſhed for ſuch wicked and perverſe Choice. But in this World many notoriouſly evil Men are leaſt puniſhed, Some are too great and powerful to be corrected by the hand of Men; and Some again in low and afflicted Circumſtances, have no other return here for their Virtue, and Patience, and ſtrict Honeſty, but Envy and Malice, Reproach and Contempt, Injury and Oppreſſion. So that, either Providence, which is nicely juſt in matters of leſs moment, is wretchedly defective in this great Concern; or elſe there muſt be a Place and Time reſerved for Rewards and Puniſhments in a Future State; and a juſt and Powerful Judge to

Socrat. in Apol. Plato in Crat. & Gorg. & Phæd. & L. 10. de Leg. Plut. de ſera Numinis vindicta.

to make amends for the unequal Diſtributions of Good and Evil, permitted in this preſent World. And that Judge can be none but the Creator himſelf.

Thus I have ſhewed, how the Contemplation of the Creatures, and the undeniable Evidence of Reaſon, led the Heathen, who had no other Guides, to the Knowledge and Confeſſion of God: My next undertaking will be to obſerve how the *Jews*, before Chriſt's coming, were able to confirm this Truth, and to convert the Heathen to the Belief of their *One true God.*

Sect. III.

The Proofs of a God peculiar to the Jews.

NOw here we muſt make a difference between ſuch Arguments peculiar to the *Jews*, as were proper to ſatisfie and confirm one of their Brethren, and thoſe which would be fit to bring over a Heathen to the Faith. Of the former ſort they had many; The Creation of the World by One God; The deriving down the *Hebrew* Religion from the Beginning; The Call of *Abraham*, and Gods familiar converſe with him; The miraculous Deliverance of their Anceſtors out of *Egypt*, and ſettlement in the Land of Promiſe; The Law received by *Moſes* from God's own Mouth; The defeat of the Idolatrous Nations; The Erection and Defence of the Jewiſh Monarchy; The Miracles and Predictions of the Prophets, and infinite other Evidences, that the God of the *Jews* is the only true God. But ſince all theſe things, peculiar to the *Jew*, could have no more Credit with an Infidel, than thoſe Scriptures have, in which they

they are Recorded; The First and great Work must be to demonstrate the Truth of the Scriptures: When this Foundation is once well laid, the Controversy is at an end; for the Scriptures are only an account of the Doings of that One God, professed by the *Jews*; whose Existence makes the Point in Question: I shall therefore observe, what the *Jew* hath to say in Vindication of his Scriptures and their Authority; which may not only be a good prevention against Infidelity, and total Defection from God, and strengthen the Jewish Cause heretofore; but is in all Ages a seasonable Argument, and of great comfort to every good Christian; because the Foundation of our whole Faith stands upon the Basis of the Old Testament.

1. *First* then, the *Jew* urges the great Antiquity of these Writings; he shews you, that much the greatest part of the things Recorded in the Bible were done before most of the Heathen Gods were Extant; and thus, as Truth is before Falshood, so God, and his Scriptures, were before Idols and their Fables. *Esdras* and *Haggai*, and *Zachariah*, and *Malachi*, the very last Writers in the *Hebrew* Canon, near * Six Hundred Years before Christ, and about the beginning of the Second (*Persian*) Monarchy, were before the most Antient Greek Historians, *Hellanicus*, *Herodotus*, &c. 'Tis true, some Poets, as *Orpheus*, *Homer*, &c. lived before; but the oldest of these reaches no higher than *Solomon*, and so Five Hundred Years short of *Moses*, the First Writer of the Bible; long after whom, most of the Heathen Gods were yet unborn, as the Gentiles and their Genealogies confess. And as for *Abraham*, who lived Five

Joseph. l. 1. con. Appion.

*An. 570. Euseb. Chron.

Five hundred Years before *Moſes*, he was before even thoſe, whom the *Pagans*, for reſpect to their Antiquity and Excellence, diſtinguiſhed by the Title of *Dii majorum Gentium*, as *Jupiter*, *Neptune*, *Pluto*; And yet even before that the Scripture contains the Story of about Two thouſand Years. The *Pagans* then and their Gods are Fables of a freſh date, in Compariſon of the Venerable Antiquity of Hebrew Scripture; Whoſe Authority muſt in reaſon overbear all Writings elſe, ſince extant before all others, in thoſe firſt times of Simplicity and Sincerity; and part of them Tranſlated into divers Languages, before the Monarchy of the *Perſians*, that is, before any Heathen Hiſtories were written. *See* Euſeb. *Prep. Evan. L.* 9. *C.* 2. 3, 4.

2. The *Jew* deſires in the next place, that the manner of Writing, Authoriſing, and Preſerving theſe Scriptures may be duly conſidered. For Writing, he ſays, nothing was ever ſet down here, but what was either taken immediately from God's own Mouth, as the Books of the Law and the Prophets were; or elſe, Collected from Time to Time by general Conſent, as matters fell out; which is the Caſe of their Hiſtorical part of the Bible in *Judges*, *Samuel*, *Kings*, and ſome other Books. That this Collection was not made by any ſingle private Man, upon Hearſay, after his own Fancy, or at a diſtance from the Events related, (as Heathen Hiſtories are) but by general Agreement, at the very Time, while things were freſh, not only in Men's Memory, but even before the Eyes of the Parties concerned, which leaves no Room for Fiction in the Caſe. Again, the Books written were not admitted into the Canon without great Deliberation, and evident

Proof

Proof of their being true. For, either the whole Congregation or Synagogue, who were to approve them, (and among whom commonly were ſeveral Prophets) knew the Actions related in thoſe Hiſtorical Books to be true, in which all the common People were likewiſe fully ſatisfied; or elſe they ſaw them confirmed by Signs and Wonders, which was the Teſtimony God gave to the Truth of *Moſes* and the Prophets. So that the Caution uſed in Authoriſing theſe Scriptures was as great as could be deſired. And for the Care of preſerving the Books thus written and admitted, nothing was ever more Nice. The Reverence of the *Jews* for their Scriptures was ſuch, as will not ſuffer us to ſuſpect any material Change or Corruption in them. For *firſt*, Twelve Authentick Copies were taken, for each Tribe One; then a Copy tranſmitted afterwards to every Synagogue in each Tribe; all this done by Notaries and Scribes, before Examiners and Witneſſes: Copies were laid up by the whole Congregation in the Treaſury of the Temple, kept under ſeveral Locks and Keys, never to be touched but by Perſons particularly appointed, nor uſed but with ſingular Reverence. To add or diminiſh, to corrupt or alter, was preſent Death by their Law. And how is it poſſible then, that among ſuch Writings, either Falſhood ſhould creep in, or Truth, once received, be afterwards depraved? Nay, which makes it in reaſon ſtill more impoſſible, the *Jew* obſerves that no other Nation under Heaven ever expreſſed an equal Eſteem for their Laws and Records: They would not offer to die for them, which the faithful *Jew* was ready to do for every ſentence of Holy Scripture. And hence, in all their

Afflictions

Afflictions, and publick Commotions, in all their Captivities and Desolations, they were more zealous to preserve these Writings than their own Lives, and have accordingly kept them uncorrupt more Ages together, than all the Nations in the World have done any other Monuments of Antiquity whatsoever.

3. A *Third* Argument for the Truth of Scripture, is the Character of the Persons who wrote it; the Historical part, I have said, was set down, and attested by Publick Authority. The Prophetick was endited by the Prophets themselves, plain honest Men, Authorised by Miracles, and yet so scrupulous, as never to say any thing of their own Head, but constantly to introduce all, with a *Thus saith the Lord.* As God's Word and not Man's, they left their Predictions in the Publick Treasury, there to be kept till the Event should prove them true. Their Lives were unblameable, their Deaths for most part in Defence of the Truth; such was *Isaiah*'s, and *Jeremiah*'s, and *Ezekiel*'s, and *Amos*, and *Micah*'s, in the Later Times of that People. And if we consider their first great Prophet *Moses*, who was withal an Historian, a Lawgiver, a Governour; the First that put Their, or rather God's, Acts into Writing, the First that formed them into a Common-wealth; this Man alone, the Jew thinks sufficient to induce our Belief of what he hath left in Writing. Epiph. de vit. Proph.

His Antiquity hath been spoken to already, and even the Heathens confess it; His Miracles are acknowledged by his greatest Enemies: And, whereas some of them Objected these to have been done by Magick, and not by the Power of God, this is a most senseless pretence. For how should a Shepherd learn such Skill in Euſ. Præp. Evang. *l.* 9, 10. Joseph. cont. Ap. *C.* 1. Ant. *L.* 2.

Magick? And why could not *Pharaoh*'s Magicians, who were bred up to this Art, deliver themſelves from his Plagues? Why did they cry out, *This is the Finger of God*? Was it ever known, that Magick divided a Sea, called up Quails ſufficient to feed Six Hundred Thouſand Men, beſides Women and Children; drew Water out of a Rock; nouriſhed a vaſt Army for forty years together, with a Dew from Heaven; cauſed the Ground to open, and ſwallow up the Tents and Families of Rebellious Princes; brought Fire from Heaven, and conſumed Two Hundred and fifty Perſons, without the leaſt Hurt to any that ſtood about them? Yet theſe Things did *Moſes* in the ſight of ſeveral Hundred Thouſand Men, in the ſight of his Enviers and Enemies; And, if any one particular of theſe Miracles had been liable to Exception, would he have dared to commit them to Writing? Would the People have ſtood by him, or received thoſe Writings for Divine? 'Tis plain then, he dealt fairly in this matter, and related only ſuch things as every Man preſent knew to be true. He wrote as he was commanded, and what God and his own Conſcience bore Teſtimony to; He cauſed the whole to be Read to the People; He laid it up in the Ark, as God's Covenant with that Nation; He cauſed them all to Vow Obedience to it; He exhorted them to perſevere in the Service of that God, a little before his Death; He publiſhed his own Infirmities, and the Cauſe why he was not ſuffered to enter the Promiſed Land; He concealed not the Offences of his Brother *Aaron*, his Grandfather *Levi*, or his Siſter *Miriam*, (as Worldly Princes uſe to do in terderneſs to their own and their Relations Honour;) He did not Labour,

Exod. 14. 16. Num. 11. 16.

bour, that any of his own Family ſhould ſucceed him in the Government; but left that to *Joſhua*, a Stranger of another Tribe, as God had appointed him. This ſhews him to have been no Man of an ambitious or worldly Spirit, but a true Servant of God; That he acted, not by Magick or Deceit, but by the Power and Commiſſion of his Great Maſter; That his Writings were true, and had all the Authority he aſſerted them to have, that is, That they were the undoubted Dictates of Almighty God.

4. All this is yet more ſtrengthned by the Univerſal Conſent of all thoſe, who wrote after *Moſes*. Profane Writers uſually correct and reprove ſome that went before; but now, as a certain Mark, that theſe Sacred Authors were all guided by the ſame Spirit, no One of them for ſo many Ages hath ever oppoſed, but all approve, and build upon, the former. The Writings of *Joſhua* confirm thoſe of *Moſes*; the Book of *Judges* that of *Joſhua*: Thoſe of *Kings* and *Chronicles* refer you to the more Ancient Records: One Prophet builds upon another, Luke, 24. and Chriſt approves them all, by that known Diviſion of *Law*, *Pſalms*, and *Prophets*, then in Uſe among the *Jews*. And Theſe are the Four External Proofs of the Old Teſtament's Authority, The Great and Venerable Antiquity; the Care and Caution uſed in Writing, Receiving, and preſerving theſe Books, the Sincerity of the Authors; and their Uniform Agreement in one Spirit.

But there are beſides theſe, ſome internal Conſiderations, reſulting from the Matter and Circumſtances of theſe Books, ſome Characters of God's own Hand, Spirit, and Providence, as legible in theſe Letters, as his Exiſtence

iſtence was ſaid before to be in his Creatures. Nay, much more viſible, in Regard that theſe Writings were contrived to enlighten thoſe blind Eyes, who could not read him in the Volume of his Works.

5. *Firſt* then, Obſerve the Subject they treat of, and the End they aim at. The *Former* conſiſts of the Doings of the One Eternal God; the later is the Glory of that God, and the Salvation of Mankind. And what Writings beſides have ſo Noble an Argument, or ſo ſublime an End? What Philoſopher ever pretended to theſe things? What Hiſtorian attributes Battles and Victories to God only? Others extol the Courage of their Soldiers, the Conduct and Vigilance of their Generals; they tell you of Fields won by Convenient Poſts, by favourable Weather, by flights of Birds, by Omens and other ſuperſtitious Fopperies; but Theſe only ſay at every turn, *God delivered them into the Enemies Hand, God diſcomfited and gave the Victory.* Which of the celebrated Heathen Legiſlators, ever left ſuch Laws, as, *Thou ſhalt Love the Lord thy God with all thy Heart, and with all thy Soul; and thy Neighbour as thy ſelf?* Which of their Soothſayers had the Confidence to uſher in his Predictions, with *The Lord hath ſpoken it?* Which of their Poets, thoſe Kindlers of Senſuality and Luſt, ever broke out into thoſe Raptures of Spiritual and Holy Love; *I will* Pſal. 18. *Love thee O Lord my Strength,* and *Whom have I* 42. 73. *in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I deſire in Compariſon of thee. Like as the Hart panteth after the Water-brooks, ſo longeth my Soul after thee O God! My Fleſh and my Heart faileth, but God is the Joy of my Life, my Strength and Portion for ever.* Profane Writers treat of Men,

Men, ſeek the Favour of Men, accommodate themſelves to their Paſſions and Infirmities, are ſubject to their Errors and Vanities; But the Scriptures treat of things above Fleſh and Blood, refer all to God and Ends above Nature. And yet the *Jews*, who wrote theſe, were as meer Men as the *Gentiles*. Whence then proceeds this mighty Difference, if not from hence; that the Heathen Writings proceeded from a Spirit entirely Humane, but the *Jewiſh*, from the ſpecial Dictates and Directions of a Spirit truly Divine, which enlightened that Nation above any other People in the World?

6. Let us in the next place obſerve the Stile and Phraſe of the Holy Scriptures; ſo different from that of Common Writers, ſo inimitable by Man, ſo expreſſive of the God that inſpired it. No Labour for Ornament and Pomp; no Nicety in Words; but a marvellous Simplicity, ſuited to the Capacities of the Weak, and yet at the ſame time, ſuch a Depth as may exerciſe the Wits of the moſt Learned. What can be plainer, than the Account of the Creation, to inſtruct the meaneſt Reader how the World began? And when all the Circumſtances are juſtly weighed, what Aſtoniſhing and Unſearchable Myſteries does the Wiſeſt Man diſcover in it? With this Simplicity there does alſo go along a conſtant Gravity, and becoming Majeſty of Expreſſion: The Laws are delivered in ſhort, plain, peremptory Words, without any reſpect of Perſons; *Do this and thou ſhalt Live*; *The Soul that Sinneth it ſhall Die*. But though the Scriptures diſdain thoſe little Artifices, which Humane Writers ſo much affect; yet, where it undertakes to perſwade, inſtruct, and move Men's Paſſions; no Writings in the

World had ever like effect with theſe. I could produce Infinite Inſtances, but for Brevities ſake, let any One Read the firſt Chapter of *Iſaiah*, and compare it with any, the moſt laboured Orations of *Tully* or *Domoſthenes*; let him read the Hymns and Pſalms in the Bible, and ſet againſt them the moſt Pathetical Poems, ever compoſed by the Wit of Man, and tell me then, whether there be any compariſon in the ſtirring and firing his Affections.

7. Another thing, which may contribute greatly to ſhewing the worth of this Book, is the Conſideration of ſome particular Matters contained in it. I ſhall mention Two. *Firſt*, Thoſe lofty and myſterious Doctrines, above the Reach of Humane Reaſon; as, That, this whole World ſhould be made of nothing; That Angels ſhould be damned eternally for their Sins; That *Adam* ſhould tranſmit the Guilt of his Diſobedience to all his Poſterity; That the Seed of the Woman ſhould deliver us from that Guilt; That God is One Subſtance and Three Perſons; That, the Second of theſe Perſons, being God, ſhould yet be made Man, and die upon a Croſs for Mankind; and that he ſhould make a way to Honour and Happineſs through Sufferings and Contempt. Theſe and many other Doctrines in the Bible, are ſo diſtant from Man's Reaſoning, that it could never have entred into his Head to conceive or invent them, much leſs to require the Belief of them from others; and therefore God, who alone could reveal theſe Secrets, muſt needs have been the Author of thoſe Scriptures, which diſcover them to us.

The *Second* thing I would inſtance in, is the Prophecies of things to come. To this Evidence

of

of their Divine Power, God challenges the Heathen Idols, *Shew the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are Gods*; ſo allowing this for a good Teſtimony of their being ſo, if they could have given it; Not but that indeed the Oracles and Soothſayers, did ſometimes hit upon the right in their Predictions, of ſome future Events: But then this was done, either by Skill and Foreſight in the Stars and Elements, or by the Aſſiſtance of Wicked Spirits: And in things either natural and not contingent, and then they might be foreſeen in their Cauſes; or elſe in ſuch as were properly accidental, and then theſe Predictions were meer Conjectures, and frequently detected of Uncertainty and Falſhood. This *Porphyry*, the great Patron of Paganiſm, freely confeſſes: And another Heathen of great Repute owns, that theſe Matters were managed ſo ſubtilly, that by the dark, and ambiguous, and general Terms of their Anſwers, the Oracle always left it ſelf an evaſion to ſave it's Credit, though the Event proved quite contrary, to what was underſtood to be the true Importance of the Words. So unable are either Men or Devils to prognoſticate things purely contingent. But now, in Scripture we meet with almoſt Infinite Prophecies, delivered by plain unlearned Perſons; in particular and expreſs Terms, many Years, nay, many Ages before, when there was no probable Appearance, that ſuch things ſhould ever come to paſs; and not any one of theſe hath failed in any one Circumſtance or Tittle ſo foretold. And becauſe this alone, though all other Arguments were ſet aſide, is a moſt invincible Proof, that theſe Scriptures are from God's own Infallible Spirit, who ſaw

Iſa. 12.23.

Porph. de reſpon. & Orac. Oenom. de falſit. Oracul.

and ſignified ſo long before, what Wonders his Almighty Power intended afterwards to accompliſh, I ſhall very briefly lay before the Reader, ſome remarkable Examples of this kind.

Such was that Prophecy to *Abraham* of his Iſſue, (when as yet he neither had, nor could in the Courſe of Nature expect any ſuch,) inheriting the Land of *Canaan*; and the yet more wonderful and unlikely Account of his Poſterities deſcent into *Egypt*; Their Bondage there, and their Deliverance from thence, after Four Hundred Years: The punctual fulfilling whereof is not only declared in the Book of *Exodus*, but acknowledged by Heathens and Enemies to the *Jews*. And it is worth our Obſervation, that this Prophecy was ſo generally Known and Believed, from *Abraham*'s time down to *Moſes*, as to be the great Comfort and Support of that Family in their Bondage, and the main Argument uſed by *Moſes*, to pacify them under all the Hardſhips of their forty years Paſſage to the promiſed Land.

Gen. 12. Exod. 12. Porph. cont. Chri. 4. Appion. Cont. Jud. l. 4.

Such again was that of *the Scepter not departing from* Judah, *till* Shiloh *the Expectation of all Nations ſhould come*. The laſt Clauſe whereof the ancient *Hebrews* unanimouſly expound of the *Meſſiah*, and this was fulfilled near Two Thouſand years after, at the coming of Chriſt: For then did *Herod* a Stranger put the Line of *Judah* out of the Government of *Jewry*; and ſhortly after did they ceaſe to be a People or Government at all. But for the firſt Clauſe, it is aſtoniſhing to reflect, how many improbable Circumſtances it was clogg'd with. For *Firſt*, when *Jacob* ſpoke that Prophecy, the *Iſraelites* were few and low, not like to depart out of *Egypt*, or ever be a diſtinct People: And ſo

Gen. 49. 10

not

not like to have any Scepter or Government among them at all. But if they ſhould, yet was there no proſpect of it's fixing in the Poſterity of *Judah*, who had three Elder Brothers. And leaſt of all in *Moſes* his time, who, when he wrote this Propehcy, had the Government himſelf; and had by God's appointment declared his Succeſſor of the Tribe of *Ephraim*. (And this by the way makes greatly for the Truth of that Author, that he ſhould leave ſuch a Prophecy in Diminution of his own, and to the Prejudice of other, Tribes, which they would certainly never have indured, had they not been convinced it really came from *Jacob*, though at a time, which gave no proſpect of its Accompliſhment.) For the ſpace of Four Hundred years from *Moſes* to *Samuel*, the ſame Improbabilities continued; At length a King was choſen, but of the Tribe of *Benjamin*, and he provided with a Numerous Iſſue to ſucceed him. And who could then imagine this Prophecy near fulfilling? Yet God's Word muſt ſtand, and therefore, when Men leaſt thought of any ſuch thing; a Poor Shepherd was choſen out of the Tribe of *Judah*, and the Government ſo ſettled in his Family, that though many of his Succeſſors offended God more hainouſly than *Saul* had done, though ten Tribes fell offat once, and returned to their Allegiance no more, but conſpired with the Common Enemies to overthrow that Kingdom, yet ſtand it did, for more than twelve hundred years; till the time of *Herod*, under whom Chriſt was born. And we may Challenge any Family in the World, to ſhew the like term of a Government continuing in it. Euſeb. Chron.

The like might be ſaid of *Jacob*'s foretelling the Gen. 48. 49.

Numb. 34, 35, 36. Joſh. 15, 16, 17. Deut. 31. Joſh. 6. 1 Kings, 16. 1 Kings, 13. 2 Kings, 23. Iſai. 42. 53. 2 Kings, 20. Iſa. 13. & 44. 45.

the Greatneſs of *Ephraim* above *Manaſſeh*; Of the Deſcription given both by Him and *Moſes*, of the particular Portion and Dwelling of each Tribe in *Canaan*, which yet was determined by caſting of Lots; Of the ſame *Moſes* foretelling how God ſhould, many Generations afterwards, forſake that People for their Sins, carry them into Captivity and Baniſhment, and finally give them up, and receive the Gentiles in their ſtead. And whence could theſe things be learnt but from God alone? Whence again, that Curſe upon him that ſhould attempt to rebuild *Jericho*? Whence the overthrowing of *Jeroboam*'s Altar in *Bethel*, by *Joſiah* Three Hundred years after? Whence thoſe Predictions of *Iſaiah* concerning the Birth, the Life, the Sufferings of the *Meſſias*, ſo punctual, that it may rather ſeem a Relation of things paſt, than a Prophecy of them yet to come? Or thoſe other Paſſages of the ſame Prophet concerning the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem* by the King of *Babylon*, and the Deſtruction of *Babylon*, the Reſtauration of the *Jews*, and Rebuilding their City and Temple by *Cyrus*? I might heap numberleſs inſtances from *Jeremiah*, *Ezekiel*, *Daniel*, *David*, *Samuel*, and many others; the whole Scripture almoſt being a kind of Divine Body, influenced with this Prophetick Spirit: And almoſt every day (though we obſerve or underſtand it not) ſome Prophecy or other is fulfilled; and ſo ſhall be to the World's End.

That theſe Writings are Authentick, beſides other Proofs, we may be ſatisfied from hence; that they were publiſhed and ſcattered into many Thouſand Hands before the *Babyloniſh* Captivity; then carry'd with the People, diſperſed over *Chaldea* and other parts of the World; ſo

ſo that there can be no poſſible Suſpicion of Forgery or an Aftergame, ſince all the World had ſeen and read them, long before the Events either did, or were ſuppoſed in any poſſibility of coming to paſs. All which is yet more ſtrengthned by the Quality of moſt of thoſe Perſons, who delivered theſe Prophecies; Not Men of Skill or Learning, like the Heathen Aſtrologers; nor of acute Parts and ſtrong Imaginations, (which *Averroes* fancies capable of arriving to a Spirit of Prophecy) nor Dieted to it by Rules, as ſome pretend *Apollonius Tyanæus* was; but generally poor, plain, ignorant Men; *David* a Shepherd; *Amos* a Herdſman; ſometimes, Women, as *Miriam*, and *Deborah*, and *Hannah*, and *Elizabeth*, and *Anna* the Daughter of *Phanuel*, and the Bleſſed Virgin, and the Daughters of *Philip*, who could not poſſibly receive the Fore-knowledge of things, otherwiſe than by the Inſpiration of the Holy Ghoſt. And this plainly proves the Excellency of Holy Scripture, the Certainty of the things contained there, and the Divinity of it's Author.

1 Sam. 16. Amos 1. Exod. 15. Judg. 4. 1 Sam. 2. Luk. 1. 11. Acts, 21.

Though the Arguments already mentioned be abundantly ſufficient to prove the Truth of Scripture, and conſequently a God; yet is it no inconſiderable Advantage, that theſe Things are confirmed by the Teſtimony of Heathens and Infidels themſelves. In whoſe Hiſtories are to be found Footſteps of all the moſt remarkable Tranſactions Recorded here; diſguiſed indeed with many odd Circumſtances and Superſtitions; but this is yet a ſtronger Evidence for Us, becauſe intimating, that thoſe Authors did not copy their Accounts from the Bible, but took them from a General and

and Antient Tradition, ſpread and received throughout the World.

The Creation of the World, and Infuſion of the Humane Soul by God, was allowed by the general Conſent of Philoſophers: The Flood of *Noah*, the long Lives of the firſt Patriarchs, the Tower of *Babel*, and Confuſion of Languages; the Affairs of *Abraham*; the Deſtruction of *Sodom*; the Memorable Acts of *Moſes*, and *Joſhua*; the Hiſtory of the *Judges*, and *Saul*, and *David*, and *Solomon*; the Building of the Temple; the Captivity in *Babylon*; the Siege of *Jeruſalem* by *Senacherib*, and his Murder at his return, committed upon him by his own Children in the Temple; Theſe and many other matters of Note, are ſo largely Evidenced by Pagan Writers, that *Joſephus* declareth the Publick Monuments of the *Syrians*, *Chaldæans*, *Phœnicians*, and many Relations in the *Grecian* Hiſtory, ſufficient to teſtify the Truth, Authority, and Antiquity of Holy Scripture; though they had been deſtitute of any other Evidence.

Euſeb. Præp. Evang. *l.* 9. Joſeph. Antiq. *l.* 1. 8. 13.

Sect. IV.

HItherto we have ſeen what Variety of Evidence God hath given to the World concerning Himſelf. Upon which Subject I have been the larger, becauſe it is the ground of all I propoſe to ſay in this Book; the fundamental Principle of all that Happineſs or Miſery, which muſt be our Portion for ever. For if this Point be ſo certain, ſo plentifully atteſted, both by every Creature, and the Words and Writings of the Creator himſelf, that no Ignorance can excuſe our not Acknowledging it,

nor

nor any Wickedneſs have the Face to deny it; then ſure it becomes us ſeriouſly to conſider what this God requires from us; and the next Reflection to that of his Creating us, will naturally be, what Duty and Thanks we owe him for it. Thus ſhall we find him a Merciful Judge, and a Bountiful Rewarder, whom we have already found a Gracious Maker and Lord. And this Thought is the more reaſonable and neceſſary, becauſe it is by no means probable, that that Wiſe God, who hath appointed every other Creature ſuch Rules of acting, as may ſome way illuſtrate his own Glory, ſhould leave Mankind alone, the worthieſt and moſt capable of ſerving it, without any Obligation to contribute to it.

And yet this St. *Paul* charges, as a moſt common and egregious Error, in the Heathen Sages; that, *when they knew God, they were not careful to glorify him as God; but became vain in their Imaginations.* They turned their Knowledge to no true Account, but applied all their Thoughts to the Vanities of this World, without any Regard to the Honour and Deference due to that Excellent Being, of whoſe Exiſtence they were fully ſatisfied. With regard to theſe, and the Judicial Blindneſs God gave them up to, St. *Paul* gives the World this Warning, that *The Wrath of God is Revealed from Heaven againſt all Ungodlineſs and Unrighteouſneſs of Men, who hold the Truth in Unrighteouſneſs*; who know God, and notwithſtanding live, as if they owned or knew him not. And if this were an Admonition and Reproof proper for Heathens, who had only that Natural Knowledge of God, which Reaſon could infer from the Contemplation of his Creatures; Rom. 1.

What

What Reprehenſion do We deſerve, who have not only that Light of Nature, but his written Word and Law Revealed to the *Jews?* Nay, and beſides this too, have heard the Voice of his only Son upon Earth; and live under the Doctrine and Directions of his Goſpel; and yet live (many of us) as negligently, as far from Virtue and a good Life, as the errandeſt Heathen of them all?

Certainly if that be true, as moſt unqueſtionably it is, which the Apoſtle affirms there of the Heathen Philoſophers, that even the little Knowledge They had of God, rendred them altogether without Excuſe: Then by our Saviour's own Rule, that *To whom much is given, of him there ſhall be much Required*, we can no way ſhift off the Inference ariſing from hence againſt our Selves, *viz.* That Our Account ſhall be vaſtly heavier, and We much more inexcuſable, than the very *Gentiles*, if, after all our clear Knowledge, and ſuch ample Manifeſtations of the Divine Nature and Juſtice, We grow vain in Our Imaginations, as They did then, and the much greater Part of the World (it is to be feared) do at this Day. If We, I mean, make to our ſelves Gods of the Things of this World, devote our Selves entirely to temporal and tranſitory Cares and Pleaſures; and laviſhly throw away upon theſe, that Time and Pains, and Application of Thought and Affections, which we ought to employ in the Service, and to the Honour, of this great and only Lord and Creator.

Rom. 1.

Luke, 12. 47.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

Of the End for which Man was Created.

THE Laſt Chapter is ſufficient to Inform us, Who is our Creator. And now the next Point, which regularly offers it ſelf to be conſidered, is, to what purpoſe God created us, and this World for Us, ſo as to make us Lords of all below. We have ſeen already, that, as Nothing made it ſelf, ſo Nothing was made for, or to ſerve it ſelf alone. And therefore it concerns us to know whom Man was made to ſerve. For the Reaſon holds equally with regard to Him too, that ſince Man was not made by Himſelf, ſo neither is it likely that he was made meerly for himſelf.

Now God's own Word hath aſſured us, that *He made all Things for Himſelf*, and if all, then Man, by no means the leaſt and moſt inconſiderable part of his Works, is no doubt included. They are the vain and inconſiderate only who look upon themſelves to be free and at their own Diſpoſal, and imagine, they were ſent into the World purely for Pleaſure and Diverſion. The Sober and Diſcreet are ſuch as *Solomon* ſpeaks of, When he ſays, *The Way of Life is above to the Wiſe, that he may depart from Hell beneath.* They keep the End of living conſtantly in View, and are perſwaded that God ſhall one day bring them into Judgment. Nay, the Chriſtian is forewarned by his Saviour, that even *every idle Word* muſt be ſeverely Reckoned for. And no Man, who converſes diligently,

Prov. 16. 4

Prov. 15. 24.

gently, either with his own Reaſon, or the Holy Scriptures, can remain ignorant or unmindful, that no Provocation charged there upon wicked men, is more heinouſly reſented, than that ſecurity of Temper, which fondly fancies, that God regards not Men's Actions, and never intends to take any Account of them. To ſuch therefore as are deſirous to diſcharge this Account faithfully, I am at preſent addreſſing my Self. And to theſe I can give no better Advice, than to look upon themſelves as Perſons in Truſt, to obſerve ſeriouſly, why they were ſent hither, and what it is expected they ſhould perform. This will keep us from rambling after Impertinencies, and make us diligent in examining our own Conſciences, how our Time ought to be beſtowed, what is to be learnt, and what done by us. This will ſoon convince us, that the true Deſign of our being placed here is to ſerve God, and by that Service to gain Heaven and Salvation. This was the Condition of our Creation, that *We ſhould be to Him a People*; and this was the Intent of our Redemption, for therefore *are we Delivered out of the Hands of our Spiritual Enemies, that we might walk before God in Holineſs and Righteouſneſs all the Days of our Life.*

Deut. 4.

Luke, 1.

And this Conſideration rightly improved will have two very valuable Effects. *Firſt*, in a due Senſe, that Serving God, and working out our Salvation is our proper and only Buſineſs; We ſhall be convinced, that every Thing which is contrary, or foreign, or not conduceive to this End, can turn to no true Profit; That all the Time and Pains laid out upon it is Vanity, and loſt Labour; ſuch as muſt end at laſt in Shame, and Sorrow, and Repentance; becauſe

becauſe this is no Article of that Reckoning we ſhall be called upon for, nor can it influence our future State, except ſo far as it may expoſe us to Puniſhment, for miſpending our Time and Thoughts upon it. And *Secondly*, ſince we have but one End to promote, and all other Creatures are only to ſerve our Occaſions in order to that End, this will help us to become indifferent to all theſe outward Things; and we ſhall deſire them, only in ſuch Proportions, as may be uſeful for the Attainment of our End. Riches or Poverty, Health or Sickneſs, Honour or Contempt, will be choſen or dreaded by us, in ſuch meaſure as theſe may more or leſs contribute to the Service of God, and the Safety of our Souls. For whoſoever ſeeks or covets, or loves, or uſes any of the Creatures, farther than thus; he ſets up a new End to himſelf, and forſakes that which he was ſent into the World to purſue. And this may be a good Direction for any Man to judge the State of his Soul by. If he attend to his true Buſineſs; If his Cares, and Thoughts, and Endeavours, and Diſcourſe, and the whole ſtrain of his Converſation tend this way; If the Degree of his Concern for the Conveniences of Life, anſwer to that of their Uſefulneſs to his main Point; If his Days be ſpent in the Study and Service of God, and his Labour be, *To Work out his Salvation with Fear and Trembling*: Phil. 2. 12. This Man is aſſuredly in a Bleſſed Condition, his Feet are in a Right Path, and he ſhall not fail at length to attain that Happineſs and Kingdom, which he ſo zealouſly aſpires after. But if, inſtead of attending to that great Concern, he turn aſide to Vanity, Promotion, or Pleaſure, or Wealth, or Fame, the Favour

of Princes, the Advancement of his Family, or any thing of no Conſequence to this main purpoſe of his Creation; If theſe Trifles employ his Time, his Thoughts, his Talk; If he Delight more in Them, than in *Seeking the Kingdom of God and his Righteouſneſs*, then his Condition is Exceeding Dangerous; and no method, but changing his Courſe entirely, can ſave him from utter Ruin. For it is not to be imagined, that any Perſon, employed in a particular piece of Service, and doing no part of that which was given him in Charge, ſhall ever receive the Reward aſſigned and promiſed, only tot he due Diſcharge of that particular Service.

And this now gives us a plain reaſon of that general deſtruction of Souls, which moved our Saviour to inſinuate, how *Few* are Saved, by calling the Way to Hell and Ruin wide and *Much* frequented; but that to Salvation narrow and ſtrait, and the Paſſengers in it very Rare: Which all comes to paſs, by that very little Account Men make of that, which is their chief and only Buſineſs. For do but obſerve the Courſes they take, and what Deſigns they purſue, and then tell me, whether this Affair come under their Management, or almoſt into their Thoughts. How many Thouſands do you find, who employ not one half hour in four and twenty, not one day in a Hundred, in the Service of God, and the Concerns of their Soul? How Infinite are the Men that break their Reſt, and Rack their Brains, about the Gains and Conveniences of this World, and how few that make any manner of Proviſion for the next? How many find time enough to Eat and Drink, and Sleep, and Dreſs, and Divert

them-

themſelves, but are always buſie or otherwiſe indiſpoſed, when they ſhould attend their greateſt buſineſs? How many Days, and Weeks, and Months, and years, are conſumed in ſports and paſtimes, without any regard of any thing that is wiſe, and ſerious, and of real importance to Mankind? How many wretched Women ſpend more days in a year, in providing Ornaments for their Body, than they do hours in their whole life, in Praying, or Reading, or any other Religious Exerciſe? And what can become of ſuch People in the End? What will they have to alledge in excuſe for this Negligence and Folly, when called to render an account of the Talents committed to their Charge? If a Steward, or a Factor, ſent abroad upon his Maſter's Expence, ſhould return at laſt with a long Bill, of ſo much Time and Money laid out, in Singing, Dancing, Drinking, Balls, Plays, Courtſhip, Hawking, Hunting, or Racing; but when he came to anſwer what time he had beſtowed upon his Maſter's Affairs, ſhould alledge, that he was ſo entirely taken up with thoſe other Entertainments, as to have no leiſure left for theſe; Who would not think ſuch a Wretch deſerved the ſevereſt Puniſhment, and all manner of Reproach? Think then, what Confuſion ſhall fall upon Them at the laſt dreadful day, who were ſent into the World, to trade for ſo rich a Prize as the Kingdom of Heaven, and have ſquandered away all their Time and Thoughts, upon the Trifles of this world, without any care or application for the other?

St *Paul* attributes the attainment of Mens incorruptible Crown, to their keeping the Goal conſtantly in view, making up directly to it, and running within thoſe ſtreight Lines, mark- 1 Cor. 9.

ed out by the Maſter of the Race. But moſt of us run after Flies and Feathers, turn out of the way, and ſpend our ſtrength in the purſuit of Vanity, without any reflection upon our Folly, till it be too late to mend it. Obſerve how the wiſe man hath deſcribed the Lamentation of thoſe truly unfortunate Perſons in Hell, who heaped up Treaſures, raiſed their Families, lived ſumptuouſly, indulged their Eaſe and Pleaſure, and thought themſelves wiſe and happy while they lived. *We wearied our ſelves in the way of wickedneſs and deſtruction, but as for the way of the Lord we have not known it. What hath pride profited us? Or what good have our boaſted riches and pomp brought us? All thoſe things are paſs'd away like a ſhadow, and as a Poſt that haſteth by; but we are conſumed in our own Iniquity.* Be not then deluded, my dear Chriſtian Brother, with the falſe Judgments of thoſe, who magnify and applaud ſuch as are in greateſt danger. The Road to *Babylon* will never bring thee to *Jeruſalem.* And what a grief will it be to change thy meaſures, after long labour and toyl in a wrong Courſe? If a man had travel'd but one whole day, and ſhould be told at night, that all his pains were loſt, the loſs of a ſingle days journey would afflict him, though his Buſineſs were not extreamly urgent, and the next day might fetch it up again. But, if his Buſineſs were great, if his Life lay upon being at his Journey's end by ſuch an hour preciſely, if the loſs were irrecoverable, and he ſo ſpent, that he could go no further, what a ſad perplexity would this be, to find he had run amiſs, and was quite out of his way? Now this will be the caſe, when the night of Death comes, with all who ſpent their days in vain projects,

Wiſd. 5.7, 8, 9, 13.

and

and neglected God and their own Souls. They ſhall find themſelves out of the way at the end of their Journey, they have drudged through deep and craggy ways to no purpoſe, they have loſt their time, their labour, and all opportunity to retrieve either; Their Strength is waſted and gone, their Danger unavoidable, their Puniſhment inſupportable, and their Grief and Calamity inconſolable.

Could we but form to our ſelves a juſt *Idea* of thoſe inward Terrours, which take hold of the greateſt Monarchs at their laſt hour, after all their Proſperity and Luxury: Could we diſcern the Thoughts of *Alexander* dying with poyſon, or *Julius Cæſar* aſſaulted in the Senate-houſe, or *Herod* ſmitten with a noyſom and incurable Diſeaſe, or that other *Herod* ſtruck with an Angel, and eaten up with Worms, or thoſe many other victorious Princes, who when they come to end a wicked and worldly Life, have quite other notions of things, than the height of their Jollity and Succeſs had ever given them before, theſe gripes and ſtings would be ſo many warnings to us, to provide for our great account, and enter betimes into thoſe thoughts, and that judgment of things, which a death-bed and a nearer proſpect of God's dreadful Tribunal, will (when too late perhaps) moſt certainly awaken in us. Remember then, that what Theſe men are now, thou thy ſelf ſhalt ſhortly be: and, that no folly is comparable to that of not profiting by the Examples and Miſcarriages of others. All men will one day agree in a right ſenſe of things. Here only is the difference; that Wiſe men have it in time, and Fools, when it is too late to do them good. Hadſt thou that ſenſe now,

thou wouldſt borrow even from thy meat, and ſleep, and moſt neceſſary avocations and refreſhments, to lay out upon the one thing yet more neceſſary. The opportunities of reforming are an infinite bleſſing, and theſe are yet in thy hand. *The living dog* in this reſpect is *better than the dead Lion*, for while Life laſts, matters may ſtill be amended. But this day wears away apace, and the dreadful Night of Death will overtake thee quickly, and then there ſhall
Deut. 32. be no more ſpace for Reformation. *Oh that men were wiſe, that they would underſtand this, that they would conſider their later End; for He is the only Wiſe man, who is wiſe to his own Soul.*

The main point in Moral actions is to regard the End, and how comes it to paſs, that this moſt neceſſary Circumſtance is wanting in our Spiritual Concerns? If Heaven be our End, what do we mean to be ſo fond of Earth; If God be our End, why do we ſo greedily ſeek the favour of Men? If the Salvation of an immortal Soul be our End, why do we ſo eagerly
Iſai. 55. purſue temporal Vanities? *Why do we ſpend our Money, for that which is not bread, and our Labours for that which ſatisfieth not?* If we be Heirs of a Kingdom, why do we enſlave our ſelves to the Creatures? If it be our Birthright to eat at our Father's table, why do we delight to
Luke, 15. feed on husks with Swine. Alas! we may complain with the Wiſeman, *The bewitching of*
Wiſd. 4. 12. *naughtineſs doth obſcure the things that are honeſt, and the wandrings of Concupiſcence undermine the ſimple mind.* But will the fatal power of this
Iſai 27. 11. Enchantment excuſe us? By no means. *This people is not wiſe, therefore he that made them will not have mercy on them, and he that formed them will ſhew them no favour.* This is a folly of Men's

ONE

own creating, and they who are ſeduced by it, ſhall not only loſe their labour, but be puniſhed for their loſs.

Think then betimes, what thou wilt do or ſay, when thy Lord calls in his Talents, and expects an Improvement, when thou ſhalt hear that dreadful word, *Give an account of thy Stewardſhip, for thou mayeſt be no longer Steward*; *when God ſhall come in a day when thou thinkeſt not, and at an hour when thou lookeſt not for him, and ſhall cut the unfaithful ſervant aſunder, and appoint him his portion with Hypocrites and Unbelievers, where ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of Teeth.* Examine therefore thy ſelf preſently, and ſtate the Account with thy own Conſcience: If thou have trifled and wandred hitherto, repent, and return, and redeem the time thou haſt already loſt. If thou haſt not yet conſidered the weight of this affair, do it immediately; And remember, that ſpeedineſs in a good reſolution is the beſt Husbandry, the moſt profitable management, and that the gaining of Crowns and Kingdoms is not a Wiſdom to be compared unto it. I will therefore conclude this Chapter, as the Preacher does his Book; *Fear God, and keep his Commandments*; *for this is the whole of Man.* i. e. In this does every man conſiſt. His Beginning, his End, his Life, the reaſon why he is a Man, is, that he may act and live in obedience to him who made him ſo, and He who does not this, is no Man in effect. For he loſeth all the Benefit of his Creation, his Redemption, his Name, and his Nature.

Matt. 25. Luke, 16. Matt. 25. Eccleſ. 12. 14.

CHAP. IV.

Religion that Service of God, which is the End of Man. Of the Chriſtian Religion in particular.

AFter ſuch proof, that Man was created by God, and in reſpect of This, and ſundry other Benefits, is bound to honour and to ſerve him, 'tis fit we now enquire, wherein the Service required by God conſiſts. Now all this is uſually comprehended under the general Term of Religion; as Piety contains the Duty of Children to Parents, and Obedience that of Servants to their Maſters. The Rights of both which Relations God expreſly aſſerts to himſelf, by one of the Prophets; *The Son honoureth his Father, and the Servant his Maſter. If then I be a Father, where is my honour; and if I be a Maſter, where is my Fear?* The acts of Religion, are many and of different kinds. Some Internal, as Love, and Faith, and Devotion, and Prayer; Some External, as Worſhip, and Sacrifice, and Vows, and ſuch other things as ſerve only to teſtify and declare the Internal. Sometimes again, Religion is meant of all manner of Vertues, and charitable Offices, though they have not immediate Relation to God; and thus St. *James* tells us, *Pure Religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this; to viſit the Widows and Fatherleſs in their Affliction, and to keep one's ſelf unſpotted from the World.* In ſhort, Heathens and Infidels have ever agreed in their notions of this word, and every Sect and

Malach. 1.

James 1. 27.

and Opinion, who have profeſſed Reverence and Honour to a Divine Being, did always call that Profeſſion of theirs by the name of Religion. But that Religion which I am now about to treat of in particular, is the Chriſtian: That ſubſtance, and form, and way of ſerving God, revealed to us by Chriſt and his Apoſtles; As the only proper and effectual method, of now anſwering our Duty, and the End of our Creation; for ſo St. *Peter* hath inſtructed us, *There is no other Name under heaven given among Men, whereby we muſt be ſaved, but only the name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* Acts, 4. 12

I ſhall not here run out into nice diſquiſitions, concerning the State of thoſe, who lived and dyed for two thouſand years together, before our Saviour's appearance in the World. It is ſufficient, that the Fathers, and thoſe under *Moſes*'s Law, believed in a Redeemer to come, as we do in him already come. And, that this Faith was required to be more or leſs explicit, in proportion as the Diſcoveries concerning him, were more or leſs plain and expreſs. They had Ceremonies and Sacraments prefiguring his coming, as we have Sacraments repreſenting that coming already paſt. He was then the *Expectation of all Nations.* Their Faith in ſubſtance was the ſame with ours; His Merits the ſame efficient cauſe of Salvation, though the Circumſtances of that Belief, and the manner of applying thoſe Merits, were different then from what now they are. How God will deal with ſuch as had not equal advantage in point of Revelation, we muſt leave it to his Juſtice and Mercy to determine. But my buſineſs is at preſent with the Chriſtian Diſpenſation, under which

which we Live at this day. And, in eſtabliſhing the truth of this, I ſhall keep to my former method in the proof of a God. To prove it is requiſite, both for the comfort and confirming of thoſe, who already believe, againſt ſeducements and temptations; And likewiſe for awakening the careleſs, and ſenſual, who alaſs! in too great numbers, ſeem loſt to all ſenſe of this Belief, and unmindful of the grounds, upon which it ſhould be entertained. But in the Proof it ſelf, I ſhall inſiſt (as formerly) upon the Teſtimony of ſuch Perſons as could not be partial, the Confeſſions of our Enemies, or, elſe the Records of thoſe, who, living before Chriſtianity came in queſtion, muſt needs be indifferent in the Cauſe.

Heb. 11. 1. The Apoſtle obſerves very truly, *that Faith is the Evidence of things not ſeen*, ſuch as Reaſon, and Arguments meerly humane, could never have made clear to us. It is the Aſſent of things propounded by God, and muſt be voluntary to make it an act of Obedience. But yet, we are here to proceed upon rational meaſures; and therefore we are not left deſtitute of Teſtimony ſufficient, both inward and outward, Acts, 14 5. to induce our Belief: *God hath not left himſelf without witneſs.* He teſtifies to the truth of what we believe, by that inward Light and Conviction, that Peace, and Joy, and Conſolation in believing. He teſtifies to it outwardly, by thoſe probable Arguments, and *Motives of Credibility*, (as the Schools ſpeak) which engage the Aſſent of impartial and conſidering men. So that, although the Object of Faith do not come to us with the Evidence of Senſe or Demonſtration, ſo to leave room for the freedom of our Will, and the Obedience of our embrac-

embracing it; yet are there ſo many Circumſtances of Probability, as give us the higheſt degree of Moral Aſſurance; and ſuch as every Reaſonable man muſt confeſs it againſt all Reaſon, to miſtruſt or hold out againſt.

This is what I ſhall endeavour to make appear, I hope, to the Readers full ſatisfaction. And one great point gained toward it already, is the Certainty and Divine Authority of the Old Teſtament. The Scriptures, which we have received from the profeſt Enemies of our Faith, which were written many Ages, before the name of Chriſtianity was known in the world. And therefore, whatever I ſhall alledge out of thoſe Records, cannot but be of ſingular Credit and Importance to my preſent purpoſe. And that is, to ſhew, that Jeſus Chriſt was the Saviour and Redeemer of Mankind, promiſed and expected from the beginning of the World; that he was the Son of God, and himſelf very God; And conſequently, that the Doctrine and Religion he hath left us, is true, and the only ordinary way of Salvation now upon Earth. For the clearer manifeſtation whereof, I ſhall branch out my Diſcourſe into three heads, ſuitable to the order of three diſtinct times, in which the matters to be mentioned fell out. The *Firſt*, ſhall contain ſuch as happened before our Lord's Incarnation; The *Second*, things done between his Birth and Aſcenſion; The *Laſt*, ſuch as happened after his departure from Earth, and return to *Heaven*.

SECT.

SECT. I.

How Chriſt was foretold before his Coming.

THE Proofs of Chriſtianity, before our Saviour's appearance in fleſh, may be diſtinguiſhed, as they were made to *Jews*, or *Gentiles*. For Chriſt being appointed from the beginning, indeed before the foundation of the World, to work out the Redemption of *Jew* and *Gentile* both, he was for that reaſon foretold to both, and each of them had encouragement and warning to expect, and depend upon his appearance.

For the *Jews*, No man can denythat the promiſes of a *Meſſias*, run throughout the whole Body of their Scriptures. By which is meant, a perſon Anointed, and ſent by God, to be a Saviour, a Redeemer, a Reconciler, a Mediator between God and Man, a Satisfier for the Sins of the World, a Reſtorer of the Innocence loſt in *Paradiſe*; a Maſter, Teacher, and Lawgiver, and finally, a Spiritual King to reign in the Hearts of Men, to ſubdue the Power and Tyranny of that Common Enemy, who vanquiſhed our firſt Parents, and makes Aſſaults upon us daily.

Of this we have Evidence, as antient as that of *Adam*'s offence in *Paradiſe*. For no ſooner had he broken that firſt Covenant, by eating the forbidden fruit, and ſo rendring himſelf, and all mankind in Him, obnoxious to the wrath of God, and the power of the Devil; but a Promiſe of Redemption is given to ſuſtain him, in thoſe words, *The Seed of the Woman* Gen. 3.

ſhall

ſhall break the Serpents head. Which imported, that One in time, ſhould be born of a Woman, who ſhould conquer and trample under foot the Kingdom of Sin and Satan. And thus, not only the eldeſt *Jews* and *Rabbins* underſtand this place, of a Spiritual Conqueſt and Dominion, but the *Chaldee* Paraphraſe applies it to the Tempter in theſe words. *They have a certain and preſent remedy againſt thee, O Devil, for the time ſhall come when they ſhall tread thee down, by the help of Meſſias their King.* Maim. Tharg. Hieroſ.

The ſame Promiſe is repeated afterwards to *Abraham*, about two thouſand years after; and again to his Son *Iſaac*, *In thy ſeed ſhall all the Nations of the Earth be bleſſed.* Which had been but a ſmall Bleſſing to *Abraham* and thoſe other *Jews*, who never ſaw this Meſſias in fleſh, had he been deſigned for a temporal King only. And much leſs ſtill to the *Gentiles*, had this Meſſias been ſuch a King of the *Jews*, as was to deſtroy and ſubdue all others to the obedience of this People only, according to the fond imaginations of the later *Rabbins*. Gen. 16. 18. 22.

The Patriarch *Jacob* is yet more expreſs, *The Scepter ſhall not depart from* Judah, *till* Shiloh, *the expectation of the nations come.* Which laſt words the *Chaldee* Paraphraſt, and *Onkelos*, both of great Authority with the *Jews*, interpret thus. Until Chriſt, or the Meſſias comes, who is the hope and expectation of all Nations, as well of *Gentiles*, as of us that are *Jews*. From which Scripture thus expounded, Two conſiderable Inferences may be drawn againſt the later and modern *Jews*. *Firſt*, That, if their Meſſias was to be the hope and bleſſing of *Gentiles* as well as *Jews*, then can he not be a temporal King to deſtroy the *Gentiles*; but a Spiritual Gen. 49.

ritual King to reign over them, and ſubdue the Enemies of their Souls. And *Secondly*, if the Temporal Kingdom of *Judah* muſt, as in Fact it did, ceaſe, at the coming of the Meſſias, then is it a very vain conceit, to expect ſuch a Meſſiah, as ſhould eſtabliſh, and render that temporal Kingdom everlaſting.

During the Bondage of that People in *Egypt*, we find but little upon record concerning them; but about four hundred years after that promiſe to *Abraham*, God gave them by *Moſes* another clear Revelation of the Meſſias, in theſe words. *I will raiſe up to this People a Prophet from among their brethren like unto Thee, and will put my words in his mouth, and he ſhall ſpeak unto them all that I ſhall command him. And it ſhall come to paſs, that whoſoever will not hearken unto my words, which he ſhall ſpeak in my name, I will require it of him.* Now that this cannot be underſtood of any other Prophet among the *Jews* but Chriſt only, is plain by that other paſſage, *And there aroſe not any other Prophet in Iſrael like unto* Moſes.

Deut. 18. 18, 19.

Acts, 3. 21.

Deut. 34. 10.

About four hundred years after *Moſes* aroſe *David*; A holy perſon, and the firſt King of the houſe of *Judah*, to whom the particulars of this myſtery, were yet more abundantly revealed; as firſt, that Chriſt ſhould be born of his ſtock and lineage; *I have ſworn unto* David *by my Holineſs, His ſeed ſhall endure for ever, and his Throne as the Sun before me.* Which words, though applyed by the later *Jews* to *Solomon*, (as indeed they may be in ſome ſenſe, ſo far forth as he was a Type of Chriſt,) yet cannot they be literally and properly true of Him, whoſe Earthly Throne was rent in pieces, quickly after his death by *Jeroboam*, and after that, utterly overthrown. They muſt therefore

Pſal. 89. 35, 36.

of

of neceſſity be underſtood of an Eternal King to be born of *David*'s Seed; as muſt alſo thoſe other Paſſages. *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. I will give thee the Heathen for thine inheritance, and the utmoſt parts of the Earth for thy Poſſeſſion.* Which were never fulfilled in *Solomon*, nor any temporal King in *Jewry* after him. Pſal. 2. 7, 8.

And much leſs were theſe that follow; *They ſhall fear thee as long as the Sun and Moon endure throughout all generations. In his days ſhall the Righteous flouriſh, and abundance of Peace, ſo long as the Moon endureth. He ſhall have dominion alſo from Sea to Sea, and from the river unto the ends of the Earth. All Kings ſhall fall down before him, all Nations ſhall do him ſervice. All Poſterities ſhall be bleſſed through him, and all the Heathen ſhall praiſe him.* Pſal. 72. 5. 7, 8, 11, 17.

Theſe words of Chriſt's Kingdom enduring to the world's end, of his univerſal dominion, his adoration by all Nations, his making all the poſterities and families of the Earth bleſſed, cannot be applyed to any King, that ever was, or ſhall be, among the *Jews*, but to Chriſt only.

This Promiſe of Chriſt to come of *David*'s Seed is repeated and confirmed by many Prophecies, particularly that of *Jeremy*; *Behold the days come, ſaith the Lord, that I will raiſe unto* David *a righteous Branch, and a King ſhall reign and proſper, and ſhall execute judgement and juſtice in the Earth: In his days* Judah *ſhall be ſaved, and* Iſrael *ſhall dwell ſafely; and this is his name whereby he ſhall be called,* The Lord our Righteouſneſs. Jerem. 23. 5, 6.

Now it is obſervable that this ſeed is promiſed here to *David*, as a bleſſing ſtill to come; four hundred years after *David* was dead; And conſequently this could not be meant of *Solomon*, or any temporal King of that Line;

Line; but of Chriſt only, who was called in a peculiar manner, *The Seed and Son of* David; becauſe *David* was the firſt King of the Tribe of *Judah*, and not only his Anceſtor after the fleſh, but in many things a ſpecial Type and Figure of him. Upon the account, of which reſemblance it is, that *Ezekiel* calls the Meſſias by the name of *David* himſelf; *I will ſave my flock, and I will ſet up one Shepherd over them, and he ſhall feed them, even my Servant* David, *he ſhall feed them, and he ſhall be their Shepherd. And I the Lord will be their God, and my ſervant* David *a Prince among them; And I will make with them a Covenant of Peace.* The *Jews* themſelves confeſs the Meſſias here meant by *David*, ſo called as a deſcendent from him. And ſo in reaſon it muſt be for; *David*, who had been then four hundred years dead, could not come again to feed God's People, and govern them in his own perſon.

Ezek. 34. 22, 23, 24, 25.

Thalmud. Tract. Sanh. Cohel.

Iſaiah, who lived about a hundred years before *Jeremy* and *Ezekiel*, was wonderfully enlightened, concerning the Meſſiah, and the State of Affairs under him, which he deſcribes after this manner. *In the laſt days the mountain of the Lords houſe ſhall be eſtabliſhed in the top of the mountains, and ſhall be exalted above the Hills; and all Nations ſhall flow unto it. And many People ſhall go and ſay, Come ye and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his Paths: And he ſhall judge among the Nations.* The ſame is repeated by *Micah*, and applyed alſo there to the Meſſias; and can have no other meaning, by the confeſſion of the very *Jews* themſelves. The ſame is foretold by *Iſaiah* in ſundry other *Chapters*, where, ſpeaking of the Meſſiah, he ſays,

Iſa. 2. 2, 3, 4.

Mica. 4.

In

In that day shall the Branch of the Lord be glorious, and the fruit of the Earth shall be excellent and comely. The *Branch of the Lord*, because the *Messias* should be *God*; *the fruit of the Earth*, because he should be *Man.* And in the *ninth* Chapter, he styles Him, *Wonderful, Counsellour*, the *Mighty God*, the *Everlasting Father*, *the Prince of Peace.* In the *Eleventh*, he calls Him the *Rod out of the Stem of* Jesse, *and the Branch growing out of his Roots*; and gives a large description of the excellent Spirit, which should rest upon Him, and the many wonderful happy effects of His Government. Of this Person again he declares, That *He should swallow up Death in victory*, That *He should open the Eyes of the blind, and unstop the Ears of the deaf*; that *He should not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets*: that *He should not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoaking flax*; that *He should bring forth judgment unto truth* and *not fail, nor be discouraged*: And, for the extent of his Commission, he introduces God the Father speaking thus, *It is a light thing that thou should'st be my Servant, to raise up the tribes of* Jacob, *and to restore the preserved of* Israel; *I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou may'st be my Salvation unto the end of the Earth.* The Prophecies of this kind are infinite; but that of *Daniel* is most express concerning the time of the *Messiah*'s coming and death: And He indeed is the common Point, in which the Signs and Figures, the Parables and Prophecies of the Old Testament center; all which conspire from time to time in signifying to the *Jews*, that *Christ* should come, that his Kingdom should be spiritual, and that it should never have an end.

Isai. 4. 1.
Isai. 9. 6.
Isai. 11. 1. to 11.
Ch. 25. 8.
35 5.
Ch. 42. 2, 3, 4.
Ch. 49. 6. Luke 2. 31, 32. Acts 13. 47.
Dan. 9. 24, 25, 26.

I paſs now to conſider, *Secondly*, the Quality of *Chriſt*'s Perſon, which is a Point of equal Importance with the former; and that, wherein the later *Jews* diſſent from us, which is, that the Prophecies alledged before do prove, that the *Chriſt* muſt be *God*, and the Son of *God*, taking upon Him our Nature, that is, both *God* and *Man*. For ſo in *Geneſis*, *The Seed of the Woman* declares Him to be *Man*; and *Breaking the Serpent's head*, implies Him to be *God*; ſince no finite or created Power, is ſufficient for ſuch a Conqueſt. By the *Branch of the Lord*, as I ſaid, His Godhead, and by the *Fruit of the Earth*, His Manhood is ſignified, whoſe *Kingdom is everlaſting as the Sun and Moon.* Who is He, *whoſe Generation none can declare?* Whom *all the Angels of Gods are commanded to worſhip*; who is *ſeated at the right hand of God?* To whom do theſe, and many other ſuch Excellencies and Privileges belong, but to *God* only? The laſt of theſe Inſtances, our Saviour is ſaid to have poſed the *Phariſees* with, by asking, If *Chriſt was* David's *Son, how* David *in Spirit could call him Lord?* ſignifying hereby that the *Meſſias*, who, according to his Humane Nature, was to be *David*'s Son; yet, with regard to his Divine Nature, the ſame was *David*'s Lord. And ſo *R. Jonathan*, and the publick Commentaries of the *Hebrews* intepret that Pſalm. The Prophet *Micah* is expreſs, that the *Ruler to be born in* Bethlehem (which the *Jews* unanimouſly agreed to be *Chriſt*) was one, *whoſe goings out are from everlaſting.* And ſuch no mere Man ever was, or can be: *Eſay* declares the Child born to be *God, the everlaſting Father, the Prince of Peace.* *David* calls him *God*, by the ſame Word, which in the ſame Text is apply'd to *God* the Father: even

Iſai. 53.
Pſal. 97.
Pſal. 90.
Matt. 22.
Jonath. Collect. & Mid. Tehillim in Pſal. 2. 7.
Mic. v. 2.
Iſai. 9. 6.
Pſal. 45. 7.

even *Jehovah*, acknowledg'd by the *Jews* to be the incommunicable Name of the one only true *God*, is given to him by *Jeremy*, as the ancient *Hebrews* confeſs: One of whom ſays, 'In this 'place *Jehovah* ſignifies nothing elſe but the '*Meſſias*'s expounding *Zephan.*III. 9. And many other Teſtimonies of *Rabbies* and *Cabaliſts*, might be produc'd to the ſame purpoſe. Jer. 23.6. *R. Abba. Comm. in Lament. Medr. Tehill. in Pſal.* 20. *Moſ. Hadarſan. in Gen.* 41.

It is farther obſervable, That the ancient *Jews*, and ſome of the latter too, do hold and prove from Scripture, that the *Chriſt* ſhall be the *Son*, or *Word* of *God* incarnate. *Rab. Kimchi* hath a long Diſcourſe to ſhew, that the *Shiloh* in *Jacob*'s Prophecy, is the Son of *God*. The Perſon, call'd by *Iſaiah* the *Lord's Branch*, is by the *Chaldee* Paraphraſe ſtyl'd the *Meſſias of Jehovah*. Thoſe Paſſages in the Pſalms, *He ſhall ſay, Thou art my Father; I have made him my firſt-born, higher than the Kings of the Earth; Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee; Kiſs the Son, leſt he be angry; Bleſſed are all they that put their truſt in him*, are alledg'd by *R. Jonathan*, *R. Nathan*, *R. Selomoth*, *Aben-ezra*, and others, to prove that the *Meſſias* muſt be the very Son of God. And the laſt Paſſage cannot be underſtood of any common Son of Man, becauſe it is written, *Curſed be the Man that truſteth in Man, and maketh Fleſh his Arm*. Thus they likewiſe affirm him to be the Word of God the Father. Where *Eſaias* ſays, *Iſrael ſhall be ſaved in the Lord, with an everlaſting ſalvation*; where *Jehovah*, or *the Lord*, is confeſt to ſignify *Chriſt*. *Jonathan* turns it, *Iſrael ſhall be ſaved by the Word of God*. *Hoſea* ſaith, *I will ſave the houſe of* Judah *by* Jehovah *the Lord their God*. *Jonathan*, *I will ſave* Judah *by the Word of their God*. *David*, *The Lord ſaid to my Lord*: *Jonathan*, The Lord ſaid unto his Word, Kimchi *in Radic.* *Targ. in Iſai.* Pſal. 89. 26, 27. Pſal. 2. 7, 12. Jer. 17.5. Iſa. 14. 17 *Chald. Paraphr.* Hoſ. 17. Pſa. 110. 1.

In 47. Gen. In 10. Geneſis. *Sit thou on my right hand*: And *R. Iſaac. Arama*, in his Comment upon *Geneſis*, expounds that Paſſage, *He ſent his Word, and healed them*; by *God*'s ſending the *Meſſias*, who is *God*'s *Word*: Job 19. 26. And *R. Simeon*, upon that of *Job*, *I ſhall ſee God in my fleſh*, infers, that the *Word* of *God* ſhould take fleſh of a Woman. Nay, which is yet more, ſome Doctors of great Authority among *R. Ibba. & R. Simeon in Zoar.* the *Jews*, have interpreted that Paſſage of *Deut.* 4. 6. and *Iſa.* 6. 3. of the Trinity of Perſons in Unity of Eſſence: and ſay, That the Three *Jehovahs* in One, and the Three *Holies* in the other; are as if the Prophet had ſaid, Holy Father, or God the Father; Holy Son, or God the Son; Holy Spirit, or God the Spirit: which Three *Holies*, make but One only Lord God of *Sabaoth*.

Once more: This Diſpute between us and the *Jews*, receives great Light and Authority, from their Learned *Philo*; one of the greateſt Men that wrote of their Nation, after the Inſpiration of Scripture ceaſed. And he, in his Book of the Baniſhment of the *Jews*, hath Words to this effect; 'What time may be appointed 'for our Return home, is hard to be determin'd. 'Tradition tells us, We muſt wait for the death 'of a High Prieſt; but of theſe ſome die ſooner, 'ſome later: But I am of Opinion, this High 'Prieſt ſhall be the Very *Word* of God, who ſhall 'be void of all Sin, whether voluntary, or in-'voluntary; whoſe Father ſhall be *God*, and this 'Word ſhall be the Wiſdom of that Father, by 'which all things in this World were created. 'His Head ſhall be anointed with Oyl, and his 'Kingdom ſhall flouriſh and ſhine for ever. This was written by *Philo*, when he little thought that the High Prieſt, whom he ſo much expected, the ſame *Word of God*, whoſe Kingdom he de-

deſcrib'd, was then already come into the World. And thus much ſhall ſuffice for our Second Conſideration, what manner of *Meſſias* was foretold to, and expected by the *Jews*.

3. The *Third* thing to be enquired into, is the Power and Authority of this *Meſſias*; and whether he ſhould change or ſet aſide the Law of *Moſes*: which is another Point conteſted by the *Jews*, no leſs eagerly than the former. For we affirm, with St. *Paul*, That the Law of *Moſes* was intended to entertain the *Jews* only for a time, by it's outward Signs and Ceremonies; that it was their *Schoolmaſter to lead them to Chriſt*, to fit them for a Diſpenſation of Faith; and then, that it ſhould be laid aſide, and a far more perfect Law eſtabliſh'd in it's ſtead. We prove, That the Law of *Moſes*, was an imperfect Law; that it was a Burden too heavy for the *Jews* themſelves to bear: A Carnal Commandment, conſiſting principally of external Services: A Law of Terrour and Fear, not of Love and a Free-Spirit: A Shadow and Figure of things to come; and conſequently was to ceaſe, when the things ſo prefigured were actually preſent: A Law peculiar to that People, and to be exerciſed only in that Countrey; nay great part of it, but in one place of that Countrey neither.

Galat. 3. Hebr. 10. Acts 15. Hebr. 9. Hebr. 10. Deut. 13. 14. Lev. 5. and 23. Exod. 23. Deut. 27.

Now then, ſay We, How is it poſſible, that a Law, made for the *Jews* and their Land only, ſhould ſerve for the Times of the Meſſias, which were to take in all the Nations of the whole Earth? How could the Feſtivals and Sacrifices, allowed to be celebrated and offered only at *Jeruſalem*, be obſerved by Chriſtians diſperſed every where over the World? Is it not therefore manifeſt, that this Law, to uſe St. *Paul*'s words,

Hebr. 7. 19. *was only the bringing in of a better hope?* contrived to wean that People, prone to Idolatry, from the Corruptions of *Egypt*, by outward and bodily obſervances, till Chriſt ſhould come and ordain a perfect Law; a Law of Spiritual and inward perfection; a Law of Love and Liberty; a Law common to all men, and fitted for every Place and Perſon; a Law ſupportable and eaſie, ſweet, and light, plain, and brief, and ſenſible; a Law for the poor as well as the rich, and in a word, a Law of Faith working by Charity? In this the *Great Prophet* to be raiſed to that people reſembled *Moſes*, in that he was to be a Lawgiver; but more to be heard and obeyed, in proportion as the Law he gave was more excellent. *Now no other Prophet aroſe* before *like unto Moſes*, becauſe none of them had authority to impoſe Laws as *Moſes* did; but were all bound to obſerve that Law, which he had left them; till Chriſt came, who was like *Moſes* in this authority of impoſing a new Law, and ſuperſeding that which he found already in uſe. Hence is that Prediction of the Meſſiah's Iſai. 2. 3. Kingdom, *Out of Sion ſhall go forth the Law, and the word of the Lord from* Jeruſalem. Which cannot be meant of *Moſes*'s Law publiſhed eight hundred years before, and ſetting out, not from *Sion*, but *Sinai*: But of Chriſt's Law it is true, that This began from *Sion*, and *Jeruſalem*, and from thence was ſpread over the whole World. Iſai. 19. 19, 21. Hence the ſame Prophet ſays of that time, *In that day ſhall there be an Altar to the Lord in the midſt of the land of* Egypt; *and the Lord of Hoſts ſhall be known to* Egypt *in that day, and the* Egyptians *ſhall do ſacrifice and oblation.* Which could not be true of the Law of *Moſes*, for by that Law the *Egyptians* could not have Altar or Sacrifice:

crifice: But it was accompliſhed at Chriſt's Coming, when that Nation became Chriſtians, and enjoy'd ſuch an Altar and Sacrifice, as our Religion makes uſe of.

The ſame is again foretold by God in *Malachi*, *I have no pleaſure in you, neither will I accept your offering; For, from the riſing of the Sun, even to the going down of the ſame, my name ſhall be great among the Gentiles; and in every place incenſe ſhall be offered to my name and a pure offering: for my name ſhall be great among the Heathen, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts.* Here we have *Firſt* a Rejection of the *Jewiſh* Sacrifices, and conſequently of the *Moſaick* Law which inſtituted it; and *Secondly* a promiſe of acceptance to the *Gentiles*, in a Worſhip more grateful than the former, ſuch as might be performed every where, and was not confined to one ſingle place, as the *Jewiſh* Sacrifices had been. In a word, God declares, *he had given* to the Iſraelites *Statutes that were not good, and judgments whereby they ſhould not live*, *i. e.* ſuch as had no intrinſick virtue of their own, nor were of perpetual obligation; but only to laſt, till the period appointed for them; Concerning which he ſays by the Prophet *Jeremy*, *Behold the days come, when I will make a new Covenant with the houſe of* Iſrael, *and with the houſe of* Judah; *not according to the Covenant, that I made with their fathers, in the day that I brought them forth out of the land of* Egypt. So that, at the coming of Chriſt, which is treated of at large in that Chapter, there was to be a New Covenant, And this, in Terms and Conditions different from the former Covenant, which God had ſtruck with that people at their paſſage out of *Egypt* to the Holy Land.

Mal. 1. 10, 11.

Ezek. 20. 25.

Jerem. 31. 31.

And now upon the whole matter, we ſee, that Chriſt was foretold, promiſed, and prefigured from the beginning of the world; that he was to be real God, as well as Man; that he came with Authority to Change the Law of *Moſes*; which, in the very nature and deſign of it, was but a Temporary and National Law; and to Eſtabliſh Another, a new Covenant of his own, calculated for all times, and places, and intended to continue for ever.

Theſe things muſt in reaſon be acknowledged wonderful, and ſufficient to engage the Belief of all, who ſhould ſee the accompliſhment of them, (which my *Second* Section ſhall prove by and by) but I have yet one thing more to urge, which is, the very particular predictions of every important Act, Event, or Circumſtance, in the Coming, Incarnation, Birth, Life, Death, and Reſurrection of our Bleſſed Lord. For inſtance, The particular time when he ſhould appear in the World, (*Gen.* 49. 10. *Dan.* 9. 26.) His being born of a Virgin, (*Iſa.* 7. 14.) The place of his Birth, (*Mich.* 5. 2.) The Murder of the Infants in the Coaſts of *Bethlehem.* (*Jerem.* 31. 15.) The Eaſtern Princes coming to adore and offer him Gifts, (*Pſal.* 72. 10.) His preſentation in the Temple at *Jeruſalem*, (*Mal.* 3. 1.) His flight into *Egypt*, and return thence, (*Hoſ.* 11. 2.) *John Baptiſt*'s preparing his way in the Deſart, (*Iſai.* 40. 3. *Malach.* 3. 1.) His humility, and gentleneſs of Spirit in the diſcharge of his Office, (*Iſai.* 42. 2.) His Miracles and Cures of Infirmities and Diſeaſes, (*Iſai.* 29. 8. 35. 8. 61. 1.) Dying for the Sins of the whole World, (*Iſai.* 53. *Dan.* 9. 26.) Being betrayed by his own Diſciple.

(*Pſal.*

(*Pſal.* 41. 10. 55. 14. 109. 8.) Sold for thirty pieces of Silver, (*Zech.* 11. 12.) The buying a Field with the price of his blood, (*Jer.* 30) His triumphant Entry into *Jeruſalem* upon an Aſs, (*Zech.* 9. 9.) The Buffeting and ſpitting upon his Face, (*Iſai.* 50. 6.) The ſcourging and tearing his Body before his Death, (*Iſai.* 53.) Dying between Malefactors, (*Iſai.* 53. 12.) The Vinegar given him to drink, the dividing his Clothes, and the Lots caſt for his Goat, (*Pſal.* 69. 22. 22. 19.) His reſurrection from the dead the third day, (*Pſal.* 16. 9, 10. *Hoſ.* 6. 3.) His Aſcent into Heaven, and ſitting at the right hand of God, (*Pſal.* 68. 19. 110. 1.)

Theſe, and many more particulars relating to the Meſſias, were revealed in Scripture, ſome four, ſome two, ſome one thouſand, and the laſt of all, above four hundred years, before Chriſt was born. And, if we lay all theſe things together, and conſider withal how exactly they were fulfilled in our Jeſus, (as I ſhall ſhortly ſhew,) If we add, that theſe Prophecies are handed down by the moſt profeſt and inveterate Enemies of Chriſtianity, and the ſame to a Tittle in their Bibles, as we have them in Ours; If we reflect upon the invincible Evidence, produced before, of the Certainty and Evidence of the Old Teſtament Writings; we muſt needs be convinced, that it is ſcarce poſſible to imagine any thing could be done for the manifeſtation of any Truth, before it come to paſs, which was not done for the ſignification of the Meſſias his Coming into the World.

After all theſe Conſiderations peculiar to the *Jews*, I ſhall very briefly ſay ſomewhat with regard to the *Gentiles*. They indeed were

to

to receive their principal Knowledge of this matter from the *Jewiſh* Nation, to whom the Meſſias was firſt and chiefly promiſed: And from whom the *Gentiles* muſt wait for our Saviour and his Apoſtles, as well as the Scriptures which bore witneſs to them both. Their certain and ſound underſtanding in the Myſteries of Chriſt muſt come from hence: But yet they had ſome particular warnings among themſelves too; which, when joyn'd with that already ſaid of the *Jews*, makes much for confirmation of the Chriſtian Truth. And for the better underſtanding this matter, we may obſerve, that beſides thoſe Intimations of the Meſſias, which might be gathered from the *Hebrew* Scriptures, tranſlated into *Greek* many Ages before Chriſt was born, beſides what might be gained by converſing with the *Jews* in their diſperſions and captivities, there were Three ways of letting the *Gentiles* into theſe Myſteries. The *Firſt* by Tradition and Writings of their Anceſtors. The *Second* by Prophecies of their own. The *Third*, by the Warnings and Confeſſions of their Idols and Oracles, eſpecially upon the approach of Chriſt's Birth into the World.

Firſt, It is evident, that, as the *Jews* had many things by Succeſſion, from their Forefathers, They from *Moſes*, and He from the *Patriarchs*; ſo the *Gentiles* had a ſucceſſion of Doctrines from the Beginning. Though, the lower they went, the more corrupt they grew; and were darkned in Divine Knowlege by the prevailing Idolatry of the Heathen World. The *Romans*, we know, derived their Learning from the *Grecians*; They from the *Egyptians*; Theſe from the *Chaldeans*, who were the *Firſt* People

People inſtructed in Divine Knowledge from *Adam*, *Methuſalem*, and *Noah*, and others of the Firſt Fathers. Euſe. b. Chron.

Now Chronologers agree, that Three famous Men lived together in thoſe antient Times. *Abraham*, the common Father of the *Jewiſh* Nation; *Job*, whom we know by his Book to have been a moſt holy and excellent Perſon: And *Zoroaſter*, whom we only know to have been a learned man, and to have left great Teſtimonies of this to Poſterity. This *Zoroaſter* might very well be acquainted with *Noah*, for *Abraham* was born above threeſcore years before *Noah*'s death; *Noah* was born five Hundred years before *Methuſelah* dyed, and *Methuſelah* lived more than two hundred years with *Adam*. It is not therefore unlikely, that *Abraham*, *Job*, and *Zoroaſter*, and others of their Contemporaries, might be inſtructed in the Myſteries of Religion, at the third hand from God himſelf. By *Noah* and his Sons I mean, who had lived before the Flood, and ſeen *Methuſalem*, who lived many years with *Adam*. Hence I ſuppoſe it is, that in *Zoroaſter*'s Writings, produced by Authors of repute, many plain indications of the Son of God are to be found, whom he calls the *Second Mind*. And by the Writings of *Hermes Triſmegiſtus*, (who lived afterwards in *Egypt*, and had his Learning from *Zoraſter*,) we find thoſe Heathen Philoſophers to have received a clear notion of the *Second* Perſon in the Trinity, whom *Hermes* ſtiles, *The Firſt begotten Son of God, his only Son, his dear, eternal, immutable, and incorruptible Son, whoſe name is ineffable.* After him again the old *Greek* Poets, *Orpheus*, *Heſiod*, and others, expreſs themſelves to the ſame purport concerning the Son of God.

Clem. Alex. Strom. 1. Origen. cont. Celſ. 6. Procl. 2. and 3. in Parim. Plat.

in Pæman. & delinceps.

God. And ſo did the *Platoniſts*, too tedious to be alledged here, and therefore I refer my Reader to *Origen*'s Book againſt *Celſus*, and St. *Cyril*'s Firſt book againſt *Julian the Apoſtate.*

For the *Second* way, their Prophecies, *Lactantius* hath collected the Prophecies of the Sibyls, wherein the Birth, Life, Death, Glory and Judgment of the Son of God are deſcribed at large. Theſe are alledged by the graveſt and moſt learned of the Fathers. *Juſtin Martyr*, *Origen*, *Arnobius*, *Lactantius*, St. *Cyril*, St. *Auguſtin*, and *Conſtantine* the Emperour; and may be conſulted at my Reader's leiſure: But I inſiſt not on theſe, becauſe their Authority is now ſo much diſowned by Learned Men.

The *Third* way I mentioned, as peculiar to the *Gentiles*, is the Confeſſion of Idols and Oracles. Eſpecially, when the ſeaſon of Chriſt's appearance drew on, and they began to feel the overruling influence of his Power and Virtue. Sundry inſtances of this kind might be produced, but I ſhall content my ſelf with two. The *Firſt*, that Anſwer of *Apollo* to one of his own Prieſts, conſulting him about God and the true Religion. *O thou unhappy Prieſt, why doſt thou enquire of me concerning God, the Father of all things, and concerning this moſt renowned King's dear and only Son, and of the Spirit that containeth all? Alas! That Spirit will conſtrain me ſhortly to deſert this habitation and place of Oracles.* The Other to *Auguſtus Cæſar* a little before Chriſt's Birth. Who, now beginning to decline apace, and curious to know, who ſhould reign after him, would needs apply to the Delphick Oracle for Information. *Apollo*, after long Silence uttered theſe ſurpriſing words.

Suid. in Thulis. Porphyr, & Plutarch. de Oracul.

Suid. in vit. Auguſt. Niceph. l. 1 c. 17.

I

A Hebrew Child, who ruleth over the Gods, commandeth me to leave this dwelling, and repair to hell. But do you however depart in Silence from my Altars. Thus the Evil Spirit, though forced to confeſs his Impotence, was deſirous to ſave his Credit, and therefore prohibited the revealing this Secret. With which however *Auguſtus* much confounded, is ſaid, upon his return to *Rome*, to have erected an Altar inſcribed, *The Altar of the Firſt begotten Son of God.*

And Thus I have ſhewn, that the Coming of the Meſſias was ſignified both to *Jew* and *Gentile*, by all the Methods that in reaſon could be expected or deviſed. By Prophecies, Signs, Types, Ceremonies, Traditions, and by the forced Confeſſion of Idols themſelves. Nay, not his coming only, but the End of it; To be a Saviour of the World, to dye for Sin, to ordain a new Law, and inſtitute a more perfect Society of Men. The Manner of his coming, The Time of his appearance; and all this, before Chriſt or Chriſtians were known in the World. It remains now, that we examine, whether theſe Circumſtances, foretold ſo long before, do really agree in our Jeſus, whom We believe to be the true Meſſias. And this ſhall be the Subject of the following *Sections*.

SECT.

SECT. II.

How the former Predictions were fulfilled in our Jesus, *while upon Earth.*

THere is a great difference to be obſerved in the Controverſy, concerning the *Chriſtian Religion*, according as the Enemies we have to deal with, be *Jews* or *Gentiles*. The *Gentile* diſagreeth with us in all the Points here alledged; but the *Jew* in ſeveral of them ſtands with us, and for us. He offereth his Life in defence of our Principles, but is never to be reconciled to our Application of thoſe Principles. Nor will he be moved by Scripture or Reaſon, to allow, That they were, or can be made good in our *Jeſus*. And in this Obſtinacy he exceeds the *Gentiles*; for as ſoon as They come to underſtand the Prophecies and Promiſes in the Old Teſtament, they make little difficulty in believing the Accompliſhment of them in the New: And few of theſe, ſince our Saviour's time, have become *Jews*, who have not ſhortly after been brought over to be *Chriſtians*.

And yet this very Oppoſition of the *Jews*, is a great Argument for *Jeſus*, and the Truth of his Religion. For this likewiſe was foretold long ago, *The ſame Stone which the builders refuſed, is become the Head-ſtone of the Corner: This is the Lord's doing, and marvellous in our Eyes.* And not only *David*, but *Iſaiah* complains greatly of the Incredulity of that People, and their inflexible oppoſition againſt the *Meſſiah* and his Doctrine; inſomuch that this peremptory Refuſal is for our advantage; and whomſoever that

Pſal. 118. 22, 23. Iſa. 6. 28. 53.

that Nation ſhould readily receive and acknowledge, would have this great Argument againſt his being the true *Meſſias*. But yet to ſatisfy the World how little ground there is for ſuch Unbelief, I ſhall with all convenient Brevity run over the chief Circumſtances relating to *Jeſus*, while upon Earth: And, by the Teſtimony of his Enemies themſelves, examine, Whether the Prophecies and Signs of the *Meſſias*, were not duly fulfilled in Him and his Actions. The whole of which Conſideration ſhall be reduced to theſe *Four* Heads. (1.) How the time prophecied of the Meſſiah's appearance ſutes with that of our Lord's coming. (2.) The particulars of his Birth and other Events, before he began to Preach. (3.) His Life, Miracles, and Doctrine. And (4.) Laſtly, His Death, Reſurrection, and Aſcent into Heaven.

1. *Firſt*. For the time at which our Saviour came into the world, it is agreed by all, whether Pagan, Jewiſh, or Chriſtian Writers, to have been while *Auguſtus* was Emperour, toward the End of his Reign, and when *Herod* ruled in *Judea*. The Three Monarchies of *Aſſyria*, *Perſia*, and *Greece*, were then ended; and the Fourth, that of the *Romans*, greater than any of the former was then (according to *Daniel*'s Prophecy) in it's moſt flouriſhing ſtate. The Civil Wars were compoſed, and, after infinite bloodſhed and confuſion, an univerſal peace ſetled. Which agrees exactly with that time aſſigned by *Daniel*, for the Meſſiah's appearance, to ſet up an everlaſting Kingdom throughout all the World. Dan. 2.

2. *Iſaiah* had likewiſe foretold, (more than a hundred years before *Daniel*) that Chriſt ſhould be a *Prince of Peace*, that *of his Government and* Iſal. 9. 6, 7.

Peace

Pſal. 72. *Peace there ſhould be no End*, and *David*, long before Him, that, *in his days ſhould be abundance of Peace*. Which expreſſions though chiefly regarding the tranquillity of men's minds, yet (conſidering, how neceſſary an outward peace was, for the quiet planting of the Goſpel, and, after how wonderful and ſurpriſing a manner this was brought about, when the *Roman* Empire was ſo freſh;) even This is a great Argument, that ſuch a time was very proper for the Meſſiah's coming, ſo far as concerns the ſtate of the World in general.

3. If we deſcend to the condition of the *Jewiſh* Nation in particular, we ſhall find an exact accompliſhment of old *Jacob's* Prophecy, concerning *the Scepter departing from* Judah, at *Shiloh's* coming. *Herod* an *Idumean* Stranger, having juſt then extinguiſhed the Government of that Line, and by many wicked Arts and Murders uſurp'd it to himſelf, which is the firſt time the Succeſſion had fail'd in that Tribe, from the days of *David*, the firſt King of it. Till the Captivity the Scripture ſhews the deſcent of all their Kings, during their ſtay in *Babylon*, they were permitted to chooſe a Governour of that houſe, whoſe Title was *Reſchgalutha*. After their return, *Zorobabel* was their Chief; and Others down to the *Maccabees*. From whom down to *Hircanus* and *Ariſtobulus*, whom *Herod* ſlew, the ſame Line continued in command, as *Joſephus* hath aſſured us. So that, by this Prophecy, it is plain, Jeſus was born at a proper time, appointed for the Meſſias, when there was neither Prince nor Governour left of that Tribe, and the *Jews* deſcended from it ceaſed to be a ſetled People or Common-wealth quickly after.

Gen. 49. 10.

Another

8. Another Prophecy affirms, That the *Meſſias* ſhould come, before the ſecond Temple (built by *Zorobabel*, upon the *Jews* return from the *Babyloniſh* Captivity) ſhould be deſtroy'd by the *Romans*. *Haggai* the Prophet comforts the Builders, and the People, in theſe words; *The Silver is mine, and the Gold is mine, ſaith the Lord of hoſts.* Haggai 2. 8, 9. *The glory of this latter houſe ſhall be greater than of the former, ſaith the Lord of hoſts: and in this place will I give peace, ſaith the Lord of hoſts.* Now the difficulty is, in what reſpect this Temple excelled the former; not in Pomp and Magnificence, or any thing preferable in the building or Ornaments; for we are told, The Old Men wept, who remembred the former Temple, and ſaw this ſo much inferiour to it: And this very Promiſe is deſign'd to take off that Grief; for thus it begins, *Who is there among you, that ſaw this houſe in her firſt glory, and how do ye ſee it now? Is it not in your eyes in compariſon of it as nothing? Yet now be ſtrong*, &c. And hence God mentions the *Silver and Gold*, as his; to ſhew, that the abundance, or the want of theſe were of no conſideration with him: And, notwithſtanding the meanneſs of the Fabrick, *this houſe ſhould be filled with glory*; nay, *with greater Glory than the former*; by ſome other way, preferable to the Sumptuouſneſs of the Building. But, beſides this difference, the Learned *Jews* obſerve five things of great Importance, which added much to the dignity of the former Temple, to have been all wanting in this Second. The Fire ſent from Heaven to conſume the Burnt-offerings; The Glory of God, or bright Cloud between the *Cherubim*; The Spirit of Prophecy; The Preſence of the *Ark*; and the *Urim* and *Thummim*. So that, all theſe Preheminences being loſt, there remains Ezra 3. 12, 13. Ver. 4.

no other account to be given of this, than the actual preſence of God incarnate, that is, the Meſſias, in his own Temple: And ſo the accompliſhment of *Malachi*'s Prophecy, *Behold I will ſend my Meſſenger, and he ſhall prepare the way before me; and the Lord ſhall ſuddenly come to his Temple, even the Meſſenger of the Covenant whom ye delight in, behold he ſhall come, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts.* The meaning whereof muſt needs be, that Chriſt muſt appear in the Second Temple, as Jeſus really did, and conſequently be born before that Temple was deſtroyed, ſo that he cannot be ſtill to come, now that, that Temple hath been finally demoliſhed for more than ſixteen hundred years: Which final deſtruction it is likewiſe remarkable, that *Daniel* hath determined to a ſhort time, after the birth and death of the Meſſias. And Hiſtory ſhews that *Jeruſalem* was deſtroyed, and the Foundations of the Temple raz'd by *Titus*, about forty years after Jeſus was put to death. Concerning which Prophecy of *Daniel*, where the end of the *Jewiſh* Policy is determined to *ſeventy weeks*, it ſhall ſuffice to obſerve, that the *Jews* computed, ſometimes by Weeks of Days, and ſometimes by Weeks of Years. That the former could not be meant here, is plain, becauſe there are but ſeven Weeks aſſigned for building of the Temple and the City, which were not finiſhed under forty nine years. That is, ſeven Weeks of Years. And this Reckoning falls in right with the Death of our Jeſus, and the ſacking of *Jeruſalem* by the *Romans*. But either Reckoning muſt be ſo long ſince expired, as to take away all ground for the *Jews* expectation of a Meſſiah ſtill to come.

Mala. 3. 1.

Dan. 9. 26, 27.

See Levit. 23 & 25. Dan. 10. 2.

This

This Time of our Lord's Birth receives farther Confirmation, from the Traditions and Obſervations of the antient *Jews*; which all centered about the time of *Auguſtus* his Reign. The *Thalmud* frequently mentions a Tradition of one *Elias*, that the World ſhould laſt ſix thouſand years. Two thouſand before the Law, Two under the Law, and Two more afterwards, under the Meſſias. Which laſt period could not, by all computation, commence far from the Birth of Jeſus. And the *Rabbins* long ſince complained, that there ſeemed to be then more than ſeven hundred years paſt, ſince the time, when the Meſſias, according to Scripture predictions ought to appear, and therefore they wonder'd what ſhould move God to defer his coming ſo long. *Maimonides* a Perſon, of mighty reputation, and ſtiled the *Teacher of of Righteouſneſs* among the *Jews*, who lived about the year of Chriſt 1140, thinks the time for the Meſſiah's appearance to have been lapſed at leaſt a thouſand years, according to the Scripture Prophecies; and that God delays this Bleſſing, as a puniſhment for the ſins of his People. And *Elias* ſays, that Chriſt was to be born indeed before the deſtruction of the Second Temple, but yet, ſays he, for our ſins he hides himſelf for a Seaſon, till we be worthy of his coming. So that Scripture, Tradition, Obſervation, all agree that about *Herod*'s Time, the Meſſias was to be born. Hence grew that publick Fame mentioned by *Tacitus*, *Suetonius*, and *Joſephus*, of *an univerſal Lord over the whole World*. Which Prophecy ſome of the *Romans* contemned, others applyed it to *Veſpaſian*; and *Herod* feared it ſo much, that for this reaſon he took ſpecial care to extinguiſh all the Line of *David*.

Thalmud. Tract. Sanh cap. helec. & alib.

Thalmud. Tract. Avodazara Maimon. Epiſt. ad Jud. Afric.

Thalmud. Tract. San. c. Helec.

Tacit. L. 2. Suet. in Veſp. Joſep de Bel. Jud. L. 7. C. 11.

This made the Wiſemen ſo intent upon the Star at our Lord's Birth, and the *Scribes* and
Joh. 1. 20 *Phariſees* ſo inquiſitive, whether *John* were the Chriſt; this occaſion'd that queſtion to our Lord
Joh. 10. 24. himſelf, *How long doſt thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Chriſt, tell us plainly.* This, Laſtly, gave ſo many Seducers opportunity to impoſe upon the People with lying Pretences, as *Judas*, *Theudas*, and others. All which falſe Chriſts it is very obſervable, ſet up for themſelves, between the time of *Herod*'s attaining to the Government, and the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*: That being the time, when the Chriſt was generally expected, and ſo, then the People were ready to take ſuch Impreſſions of Deceit.

Since then, (to conclude this *Firſt* particular) there met ſo many ſigns and arguments together, about the time of Jeſus his Birth, as, The general Peace of the *Roman* Empire; The Tranſlation of the Government from *Judah*; The deſtruction of the ſecond Temple; The juſt calculation of *Daniel*'s Weeks; The Obſervations and Traditions of *Rabbi*'s; The univerſal expectation of the *Jews*; And now the palpable experience of more than ſixteen hundred years, ſince our Jeſus his appearance, wherein the *Jews* in vain expect another Meſſias; ſince they are diſperſed over the face of the whole Earth, without Temple, or Law, or Sacrifice, or Prophet, or Promiſe of Reſtauration; (which never happened to them in any of their Exiles, Captivities, or Deſolations, before the death of Jeſus;) Theſe things laid fairly together, give us abundant and undoubted ground to conclude, that Jeſus was born at the preciſe time appointed, and foretold by God's Holy Spirit, and conſequently, that he was the Only, the True Meſſias,

and

and Saviour of the World. A Truth which will be yet more fully evinced by my

II. Second Conſideration, which relates, to his Family, his Conception, his Birth, Circumciſion, Being worſhipped by the Wiſemen, Preſented in the Temple, and carried by Flight into *Egypt*.

1. As to his Lineage; No man ever denyed Jeſus to be deſcended of the Tribe of *Judah*, and of the Houſe of *David*. This is proved in the Genealogies in St. *Matthew*, and St. *Luke*. Confirmed by his Mother and reputed Father going up to *Bethlehem* the City of *David*, to be taxed. The Scribes and Phariſees and unbelieving *Jews*, who objected his being a Carpenter's Son, are never found to have objected againſt him, that he was not of the Family of *David*. And yet this, could it have been made out, would have been a weightier Point than all the reſt, and have put an end at once to the Controverſy, whether he were the very Meſſias. Nay, the *Jewiſh* Talmud it ſelf declares, That *Jeſus of* Nazareth *who was Crucified, was of the Blood Royal from Zorobabel, of the houſe of* David.

Matt. 1. Luke, 3. Luke, 2.

Thalmud. tract. Sanhed. Nigmarhad.

2. The Manner of his Conception, and the Meſſage of the Angel, does indeed principally depend upon the relation and credit of the Virgin her ſelf, who alone was privy to it; and upon the Teſtimony of *Joſeph* to whom it was revealed by an Angel afterwards. But yet, if a man conſider the Circumſtances of the thing, the Character of the Reporters; the great improbability, that *Joſeph*, had he not been fully ſatisfied of this Truth, ſhould ſo patiently conceal a thing ſo much againſt the Law, and againſt himſelf; The Innocent age of the Bleſ-

ſed Mother, not exceeding fifteen at moſt, (as St. *Auguſtine* and other Fathers prove.) All theſe things make it moſt unlikely, and morally impoſſible, that this matter ſhould be invented, and paſs upon the World. To all which if the Reader would add that Prophecy of Hers, that *All generations ſhould call her Bleſſed*, then moſt improbable, but now exactly fulfilled, there need no more or greater Circumſtances, to put this truth out of all reaſonable doubt.

Auguſt. de Trin. lib. 4 c 5 cont. Jud. cap. 5. Chryſoſt.

3. As to the kind and manner of his Nativity, the Scripture is expreſs, that the Meſſiah muſt be born of a Virgin; *Behold a Virgin ſhall conceive, and ſhall bring forth a Son*, ſays, *Iſaiah* to King *Ahaz*, and gives this as a ſign, or marvelous inſtance, to the houſe of *David*, of a moſt miraculous Deliverance, which the Love of God had in reſerve for them. But ſuch a ſign it could not be, if the latter *Rabbins* evaſion were juſt, who interpret the Text of a *Young Woman* only. And therefore the *Greek* renders it very truly, by a word, which admits of no ambiguity. And ſo the ancient *Jews* underſtood it. One of them upon thoſe words of the Pſalmiſt, *Truth ſhall bud out of the Earth*, obſerves, it is not ſaid, ſhall be ingendred, but ſhall bud; to denote, that the Meſſias, who is meant by Truth, ſhall not be begotten as other men are: And in another place he alledges another *Rabbi* of the ſame Opinion, and that he proved it from thoſe words of the 110 *Pſalm*, *From the womb of the Morning thou haſt the dew of thy Youth.*

Iſai. 7. 14.

R. Sim. Ben. Johai. in Gen. 2. R. Moſes. Hadar in Pſal. 85. & in Gen. 25.

And this miraculous Birth is again as plainly foretold by thoſe words of *Jeremy*, *The Lord hath created a new thing in the Earth; A*

Jer. 31. 22.

Woman

Woman ſhall compaſs a man. The Prophecies of the *Sibyls*, (as *Betuleius* hath delivered them to us) mention the Mother of this Spiritual King, as a moſt pure and holy Virgin. And *Clem. Alexandrinus* ſays, that *Simon Magus* pretended himſelf born of a Virgin, that he might not be thought inferiour to Jeſus, in this important point. Recog.

4. *Bethlehem* where Jeſus was born, had been long foretold and known, for the place deſigned for Chriſt's Birth. *Thou* Bethlehem Ephrata, *though thou be little among the thouſands of* Judah, *yet out of thee ſhall he come forth unto me, that is to be Ruler in* Iſrael; *whoſe goings forth have been from of old, from everlaſting.* By which words *Micah* deſcribes the ſingular Priviledge of this, though but a ſmall Town, in compariſon of many others belonging to the Tribe of *Judah*: That in It that Governour of *Iſrael* ſhould be temporally born, whoſe divine Birth was before the World, from all Eternity. And thus the great Author of the *Chaldee* Paraphraſe, who dy'd before Chriſt was born, and alſo *R. Selomoh*, and *R. Hacadoſch* interpret this Paſſage, in their Commentaries upon *Micah*. And ſome have thought this to be contained in that Memorable Paſſage of *David*. *Pſalm*, 132. 3, 4, 5, 6. Mic. 5. 2.

5. The Angels appearing to the Shepherds at our Lord's Nativity, is a Circumſtane depending upon the Credit and Honeſty of the Reporters. And no man can ſuppoſe they would ever feign a Story, which had it been falſe, were moſt eaſie to have been confuted by the Teſtimony of thoſe Shepherds themſelves.

6. Of the Name given our Lord at his Circumciſion, it is remarkable, that *R. Hacadoſch*, proves in his Cabaliſtical way, that the Meſ-

Iſai. 9. Gen. 49. Pſal. 72. 96.

ſiah's name at his coming ſhould be Jeſus; For which among others, he aſſigns this reaſon; that, as the Name of Him, who firſt brought the *Jews* out of Bondage into the Land of Promiſe, was *Jeſus* or *Joſhua*, ſo muſt his Name be *Jeſus*, who ſhall the ſecond time deliver them from their preſent bondage, and reſtore them to the poſſeſſion of their antient Country. Which is the chief benefit the later *Jews* expect from the Meſſias. Nor is it probable, that our Lord's Mother ſhould impoſe this Name of her own head, ſince thoſe of *Abraham*, *Iſaac*, *Jacob*, and *David*, were commonly in higher eſteem, and, had not a particular Revelation interpoſed, more likely to have been given to this Child, than One which had not belonged to any of the moſt Eminent Patriarchs.

Mat. 2.

7. The Coming of the Wiſemen from the *Eaſt* is mentioned by St. *Matthew*, as a matter publickly known. For ſuch the Conſult of the Scribes and Phariſees, upon their Enquiry where Chriſt the new King was born, and the barbarous Murder of ſo many Innocent Children, muſt needs have rendred it. And the Evangeliſt could not have given the Adverſaries of our Religion a greater Advantage againſt him, than to have begun his Goſpel with a notorious Untruth, in which infinite perſons

L. 2. C. 25.

then alive could have eaſily diſproved him. The Star, by which they were guided, is mentioned by *Pliny*, under the name of a Comet, appearing in the latter end of *Auguſtus* his Reign, and exceeding different from any, which had ever been ſeen before. It was judged (he tells us) by the whole College of Soothſayers, contrary to the generality of thoſe extraordinary Stars, to portend ſome univerſal Good to the World,

World, and for that reaſon had an Image of Metal erected to it at *Rome*. *Is Cometa unus*, ſays he, *toto orbe colitur*. *Origen* mentions one *Cheremon* a Stoick, much concerned at the conſideration of this Star, and taking a journey into *Judea*, to inform himſelf fully of the matter; becauſe after the appearance of it, he found the Power of his Gods ſenſibly decay. And *Chalcidius* a Platonick adds, that the *Chaldean* Aſtronomers did from hence infer ſome God to have deſcended from Heaven, for the Benefit of Mankind. Cont. Celſ. Chalci. apud Marſ. Ficin. de Stella.

8. St. *Luke* relates the preſenting of Jeſus in the Temple after forty days, according to the Law of *Moſes* concerning the Firſtborn of Males; and takes notice withal of two Reverend Perſons, *Simeon*, and *Anna* the Prophetess, coming in at the ſame time, and acknowledging him for the Saviour of the World. Foretelling ſeveral things which ſhould afterwards happen, to Him, his Followers, and his bleſſed Mother. Luke. 2.

9. His flight into *Egypt* for fear of *Herod*, St. *Matthew* obſerves to agree with a Prediction of *Hoſcadony* before; And *Iſaiah* is likewiſe ſuppoſed to have deſcribed it, when he ſaid, *Behold the Lord rideth upon a ſwift Cloud, and ſhall come into* Egypt, *and the Idols of* Egypt *ſhall be moved at his preſence*. Which laſt Clauſe *Euſebius* argues to have been evidently fulfilled, in that eager zeal, by which the *Egyptians*, formerly of all Nations the moſt ſunk in, and prone to, *Idolatry*, abandoned their falſe Gods, and came early into the Faith. It follows in the Prophet, *and I will give the* Egyptians *over into the hand of a cruel Lord, and a fierce King ſhall rule over them*. Which was likewiſe accompliſhed Matt. 2. Hoſ. 11. Iſai. 19. 1. Dem. Evang. L. 6. C. 20. & 9. C. 2, 3, 4. Iſai. 19 4.

pliſhed about the time of our Lord's coming; for then, after many Ravages and Barbarities exerciſed upon them by the *Roman* Generals, *Pompey*, *Caſar*, and *Anthony*; *Cleopatra*, their Queen, the laſt of the *Ptolomy* Line, was forced to flee; and *Auguſtus* poſſeſt himſelf of *Egypt*, and ſubjected it, as a Province, to the *Roman* Empire. But then conſider how *Iſaiah* concludes this matter after threatning ſo many temporal afflictions: *In that day there ſhall be an Altar unto the Lord, in the midſt of the land of* Egypt; *they ſhall cry to the Lord, and he ſhall ſend them a Saviour; There ſhall be a bleſſing in the midſt of the land, whom the Lord of Hoſts ſhall bleſs, ſaying, Bleſſed be* Egypt *my People.* And ſo much for my *Second* Conſideration.

V. 19, 20, 24, 25.

III. The *Third* concerns the Life, and Converſation, the Doctrine and Miracles of our Jeſus. Concerning whom, after his return out of *Egypt*, till his Baptiſm, which was in the thirtieth year of his Age very little account is to be met with, either in Sacred or Profane Story. That time, being thought to have been employed in the common exerciſes and labours of a mean private life, that ſo he might at once demonſtrate, both his real Manhood, and his Averſion to Idleneſs and Sloth.

Juſtin. in Tryph. Chryſ. in Joan. Aug. de Trin. L. 4. C. 5.

St. *John* Baptiſt is mentioned by all *Hebrew* Writers of that time, with great praiſe and admiration of his eminent Sanctity. *Joſephus* calls him a moſt excellent Perſon, ſtirring up the *Jews* to the ſtudy and practice of Virtue. He likewiſe adds, that *Herod*, partly enraged at the vaſt concourſe of People to him, and partly at the Sollicitation of *Herodias* his Brother's Wife, but his Concubine (for whom he had turn'd off his own Wife, the Daughter of *Are-*

Antiq. 18. 7.

tas King of the *Arabians*) firſt put him in Priſon, and ſoon after to death. To which Murder that Author aſcribes the Calamities of that *Herod*, and his whole Family. This perſon is intended by that *Meſſenger*, whom the Lord in *Malachi* declares he would *ſend to prepare his way before him.* And this was done by *John*'s Preaching, and Baptiſm, of Repentance. Who, when Jeſus came to him, immediately knew, and publiſhed him for the Meſſias, in the preſence of all the People, though he had never ſeen him before. And this acknowledgment was confirmed by a Viſion and Voice from Heaven, publickly heard and ſeen by the multitudes; as three of the Evangeliſts teſtify. Which they durſt never have preſumed to do, had not the matter of fact been evident, and paſt danger of contradiction. Now what greater Confirmation can we deſire of his being the true Meſſias, than that *John* the Baptiſt, (a Perſon of confeſſed Wiſdom and Virtue, and Holineſs, in the opinion of our greateſt Adverſaries the *Jews*,) ſhould refuſe this Honour and Title when offered to himſelf, and place it upon Jeſus: that he ſhould ſend his Diſciples and Followers to Him, and direct them to obey His Doctrine? And this 'tis moſt evident he did, for not one of *John*'s Diſciples ever after could be inſtanced, in, who was not a Chriſtian.

Mal. 3. 1.

Matth. 3. Mark, 1. Luke, 3.

When Jeſus was baptized, he began to preach: And his whole Doctrine tended to the illuſtration of his Father's glory, the declaring his Will, and the reformation of Men's Manners. All centred in this common Principle, *The Love of God and our Neighbour.* His Manner and Style was eaſie and perſpicuous, though treating of moſt profound Myſteries: He had

no

no pomp of Rhetorick, no art of inſinuation, no complying with the Corruptions of Humane Nature, like the old Orators and Philoſophers. He did not encumber his Religion with outward Ceremonies, nor pollute it with Carnality, and a Worldly Spirit; But All was refined; All purity and ſimplicity; All truth and honeſty; All humility, and charity.

He diſannulled no one point of *Moſes*'s Law, which was Moral and Spiritual, but explained, revived, and exalted ſuch to their juſt perfection. *Moſes* commanded external Obſervances, Jeſus inward Obedience. The Law ſaid, *Love your Friends* and Brethren; the Goſpel, *Love Enemies and Strangers. That* commands not *to kill*; *This* not to be *angry without a cauſe*, and, when there is a cauſe, not to reproach in that anger. *That* prohibits actual Adultery; *This* wanton Looks and the very kindling of unlawful deſires. *That* ſuffered no extortion upon a *Jew*; *This* ſays, Defraud and deal hardly by no man. The Law eſteem'd *Jews* only to be Neighbours, the Goſpel extends the importance of that word, and the duties of that Relation, to every man alive. The Law appointed Sacrifices for Sin, of the Flock and the Herd; the Goſpel requires no Sheep or Oxen, but, inſtead of them, the much more precious Sacrifice of a contrite, humble, and believing Heart, depending upon the Blood of him that dyed for all, and recommended by ſincere and ſtedfaſt reſolutions of a better life. In a word, This Doctrine aims at the true and perfect ſervice of God, the Maker and Redeemer of Mankind; the exalting his name, and power, and goodneſs, and glory; and at the beating down the pride of Man's heart, by repreſenting his

miſery

misery, and lamentable infirmities; at the contempt of this World and it's Vanities; at the mortifying our Senſual Appetites, correcting and curbing our Paſſions; at the unfeigned love of others; at raiſing our Souls toSpiritual and Heavenly Thoughts and Objects; at peace of Conſcience, purity of Body; and, in one word, at reſtoring us to a ſtate of Innocence, and Simplicity, and Angelical Sanctity upon Earth, that ſo we may *be meet to be made partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in Heaven.* Such was the Doctrine of *Jeſus*, and ſuch as this the Prophets conſtantly foretold ſhould be the Doctrine of the *Meſſiah* at his Coming.

3. His Life and Converſation, even by the Teſtimony of his greateſt Adverſaries, was yet more admirable than his Doctrine: This being a moſt lively Picture, wherein all the Graces of that Doctrine were moſt beautifully expreſs'd. A Perſon of ſuch ſteddy Gravity, that he was never obſerv'd to be gay; Of ſuch profound Humility, that, though the Son of GOD, he condeſcended to the meaneſt Offices of a Servant; Of ſuch invincible Meekneſs and Patience, that the moſt barbarous Injuries and inſolent Affronts, never drew from him one angry word: In ſhort, ſuch as *Iſaiah* had declar'd ſhould *not ſtrive, nor cry, nor make his voice to be heard in the ſtreets:* Such as *Zechariah* foreſaw ſhould *come to Sion meek and lowly.* And, as the Prophets had foretold, ſo the *Devils* themſelves could not forbear confeſſing, the Virtue and Sanctity of the *Meſſias* to have been fulfill'd in the Perſon of JESUS. *Porphyry*, after ſeveral Oracles uttered by his Idols to this purpoſe, breaks out into theſe words; *It is ſtrange to conſider what teſtimony the Gods give to the ſingu-*

Iſai. 42.
Zech. 9.
De Laude Philoſ.

Antiq. 18. *cap.* 7. *singular Piety and Virtue of* Jesus; *of which they declare him rewarded with Immortality; but yet these* Christians *are deceiv'd in calling him* God: And *Josephus* the *Jew* says, *About this time liv'd one* Jesus *a wise Man, if it be fit to call him a Man; a worker of most astonishing Miracles, and a Master and Teacher of all who were willing to embrace the Truth.*

Here we may observe great stress laid upon the Miracles of *Jesus*, which come now in the next place to be considered. And, as this History testifies such Miracles to have been done, so are those Miracles as expresly foretold by the Prophets, as Marks of the true *Messias*. Of Him it is declared, That he should make proof of his Commission, by giving sight to the Blind, opening the Ears of the Deaf, loosing the Tongues of the Dumb, and conveying Strength and Agility to the Halt and Maimed. To which Predictions, the *Jews* in their *Thalmud* agree, and acknowledge that the *Messias* shall be most wonderful in working Miracles. Their publick Commentary upon *Ecclesiastes* says, *All the former Miracles of Prophets and holy Men shall be nothing to the Miracles of the* Messiah, *when he cometh.* And hence was that Question among the *Jews*; *Shall* Christ *when he cometh do more Miracles, than these which this Man hath done?* Now of those Prophecies being accomplish'd in our *Jesus*, there can be no difficulty. For the *Jews* themselves, do not only bear record, in their *Thalmud* to his Miracles, but they mention many others, not related by the Evangelists. And *Mahomet*, in his *Alcoran*, affirms *Jesus* the Son of *Mary*, to have been a great Prophet, and to have wrought his Miracles by the Power and Spirit of GOD only: And, that He himself was sent to confirm the

Isai. 35.

Yrasl. Beraesth.

Midrash Cobeleth, cap. 1.

Joh. 7. 31.

Avodazara Cobeleth

Alcor. Azoar p. 4. 11, 13.

the Doctrine of *Jeſus* in all Points, except that of his Godhead; but here he pretends, *Jeſus* went too far, and was check'd by GOD for his Preſumption, when he return'd to Heaven.

Thus much then we may gather from the Confeſſion of profeſt Enemies; and, though this be a great deal, conſidering what Witneſſes it comes from, yet if they ſhould attempt to deny or diſſemble the matter, we are able to prove it upon them by undeniable Arguments; eſpecially in two Points, which there is no ſtanding out againſt.

The *Firſt* is, The calling and retaining his Apoſtles and Followers, which *Joſephus*, in the place laſt referred to, looks upon as a moſt ſtupendous thing. Theſe were Men of different Callings, Conditions, and Engagements in the World: And yet at the firſt word, they immediately quitted All, Father, Mother, Wife, Children, and all Temporal reſpects, and followed a Perſon, who had neither any thing to give, nor made them any Promiſes of Advantage in this World. One, that never ſpoke them fair, or delivered any Doctrine, which was not repugnant to Senſual Pleaſure, and the Charms of this Life; as abundantly appears by their own Writings, and Teſtimonies concerning him. One deſpiſed and rejected by the greater, and in common repute the better ſort of the People; by the ſeemingly Wiſe and Learned of that Countrey; and, eſpecially by the Governing Party, ſuſpected as a dangerous Enemy to the State. One that had neither Friends in the World to bear him out, nor ſo much as a Houſe to put his Head in; and yet, notwithſtanding all theſe Diſcouragements, Men of worldly buſineſs, Women of Families and Condition; nay, ſome of them great Sinners, and very looſe-livers before,

for-

forſook all their Temporal Expectations, and Imployments, and followed him with Inconvenience, Danger, and Loſs. They continued with him in his Poverty and Afflictions; they were content to loſe their Lives for him, and choſe this as a leſs calamity than abandoning Him and his Service. Which is ſuch a Miracle, as never had a Parallel in the whole World, and muſt needs be allowed to proceed from ſome Cauſe very extraordinary, and above Nature.

The *Second* Particular I would mention, conſiſts of ſuch Acts, as far exceed all Human Ability, and theſe alone openly, in the ſight of his mortal Enemies, the *Jews*. Theſe the Evangeliſts have publiſhed to the whole World; and St. *Matthew* did it in the *Hebrew* Tongue, and at a time, when many Perſons yet ſurvived, upon whom they were wrought, or who might have been Witneſſes to the Truth of the thing. Such was the raiſing *Lazarus* from the Dead in
Joh. 11. *Bethany*, a Village but at a little diſtance from *Jeruſalem*, at whoſe Death and Burial many of the *Scribes* and *Phariſees* muſt needs have been preſent (according to the *Jewiſh* Cuſtom of that time,
Antiq. lib. mentioned by *Joſephus*.) They ſaw him interred,
17. *cap.* 2. and all the Funeral Rites perform'd, and they ſaw him raiſed out of the Grave, by *Jeſus* too; four days after. They eat, and drunk, and converſed with him after his return to Life; they might ſee him every day in the Streets of *Jeruſalem*. And is it poſſible for this to be all a Fiction?

Mark 5. Such again was the reſtoring *Jairus*'s, the Ruler of the *Synagogue*'s Daughter, and the many Circumſtances which muſt needs have made it
Luke 7. notorious. Such his raiſing the Widow's Son

at

at *Naim*, in the preſence of them who bore the Corps to his Burial. Such, healing the Impotent Man at the Pool of *Bethesda*, when the City was crowded with People at the *Paſſover*. Such, diſpoſſeſſing him that had the Legion of Devils, known to have raged in the Mountains for a long time, ſo that People durſt not paſs that way; and ſending the Evil Spirit into a Herd of Swine, with ſuch Power, as to drown two thouſand of them preſently in the Sea; whereupon a whole Country was put into ſo general a conſternation, as to entreat he would depart out of their Coaſts. Such, the Feeding and Feaſting five thouſand Men at once, beſides Women and Children, with five Barley-loaves, and two ſmall Fiſhes. Such, turning Water into Wine, before the Gueſts of a Marriage-Feaſt. Such, Healing an incurable Dropſy, at a *Phariſee*'s Table; and an Iſſue of Blood in the midſt of a mixt Multitude. Theſe and infinite other Miracles were done ſo publickly, and written ſo early, and when many would have been moſt zealous and heartily glad to diſprove them; that I cannot but conclude the Fact certain. And ſince theſe are above the power of Nature, and could be done by no Power but GOD'S; who will not, cannot, aſſiſt, or give teſtimony to a falſhood, it muſt follow, that what *Jeſus* taught was true. And ſince he declared himſelf the °*Meſſias*, his Miracles prove that he was ſo indeed, which is the importance of his own Argument to the unbelieving *Phariſees*: *If ye believe not me, believe my Works; and if I do not the Works of the Father, believe me not.*

Joh. 5. Mark 5. Joh. 6. Joh. 2. Luke 14. Mat. 9. John 10. 37, 38.

IV. I come now to the *Fourth* and laſt Branch of this Particular, which relates to the Paſſion, Reſurrection and Aſcenſion of *Jeſus*. About the

firſt of which there is little or no Controverſy; ſince all his Enemies agree him to have been betray'd by his own Diſciple, apprehended and delivered up by the *Jews*, condemned and put to death by the *Gentiles*. *The Principal of his Countrey*, (ſays *Joſephus*) *having accuſed* Jeſus, *and delivered him to* Pilate, *the then Governour of* Judea, *under the* Roman *Emperour*, *he ſentenced him to the Croſs*. The Enemies of *Chriſtianity* do not only acknowledge, but boaſt in this; and one of their greateſt Quarrels, and pretences of Scandal taken at us, is, That we ſhould worſhip as a Divine Perſon, a Man who died in that ignominious manner. But now; If it can be made appear, that all this was the wiſe and eternal Appointment of God, the ſurprizing Method which he thought fit to take for redeeming Mankind; that theſe things were expreſly foretold by the Prophets, and thoſe Prophets ſo underſtood heretofore by the Learned in the *Jewiſh* Law; then, I preſume, every reaſonable Reader will be ſatisfied, and content to ſubmit the Fooliſhneſs of Man to the Wiſdom of God.

To begin with the firſt Step made by *Jeſus* toward his Paſſion; that triumphant Entry, I mean, which he made into *Jeruſalem*, after ſuch meaſures of Inſtruction, and ſuch evidence of Miracles had been afforded, as were abundantly ſufficient, and the time ordained for his Paſſion now approached, he came into the City upon an Aſs, attended by the multitudes, with a purpoſe to meet and receive his Death. And this Solemn Approach was foretold by *Zecha-*
Zech. 9. 9. *riah*, ſome hundreds of Years before, *Rejoyce greatly, O Daughter of* Sion, *ſhout, O Daughter of* Jeruſalem, *behold thy King cometh unto thee. He is juſt, and having Salvation, lowly, and riding upon an Aſs,*

Aſs, and upon a Colt, the Foal of an Aſs. Some few days after this, he was betray'd and ſold by one of his own Diſciples, as *David* long before had in many paſſages predicted. Then followed his Apprehenſion and reproachful Treatment by the *Jews*, thoſe Buffettings and Spittings, ſo exactly agreeable to *Iſaiah*'s Deſcription; *I gave my Back to the ſmiters, and my Cheeks to them that plucked off the Hair: I hid not my Face from ſhame and ſpitting.* After theſe barbarous Indignities, the *Jews* delivered him up to the *Roman* Governour, and never ceaſed purſuing their implacable Spight, till they ſaw him actually upon the Croſs. Nay, even then too, he was uſed with all the cruelty and diſdain; which *David* in the Perſon of the *Meſſias*, had complained of ſo many Ages before. *They pierced my Hands and my Feet; they parted my Raiment among them, and upon my Veſture did they caſt lots. They gave me gall to eat, and when I was thirſty, they gave me vinegar to drink. All they that ſee me, laugh me to ſcorn; they ſhoot out their Lips, and ſhake their Heads, ſaying, He truſted in God, that he would deliver him; let him deliver him, if he will have him.*

Pſal. 41. 55. 109.

Iſa. 50. 6.

Pſal. 22. and 69.

This for the Manner of his Death: But as to the End of it, the Scriptures frequently declare, he died for the Sins of Mankind. This was prefigur'd by the Sacrifice of *Iſaac*, and the Lifting up of the *Brazen Serpent* in the Wilderneſs; in ſhort, by all the Bloody Sacrifices of the *Moſaical* Diſpenſation. It was foretold not only in the paſſages produced already, but moſt expreſly by *Daniel*, *The Meſſias ſhall be cut off, but not for himſelf:* And *Zechariah* foretels not only his Death, but the Manner and circumſtances of it; when he ſays in the Perſon of *Chriſt*, *They ſhall look on me, whom they have pierced.* But if we

Gen. 22.

Num. 21.

Dan 9. 26.

Zech. 12. 10.

would read this whole Matter, ſet down ſix hundred Years before, as clearly as if the Author had been an Eye-witneſs of it, let us peruſe the LIII*d.* of *Iſaiah*, who, to intimate the ſtrangeneſs of the Caſe, begins his Narration thus: *Who hath believed our report?* And then goes on in terms too well known to need repeating in this place. So particularly was the Death of *Chriſt*, foretold to the *Jews*; nor do the Ancient Teachers among them pretend to fix any other Senſe upon theſe Paſſages. The *Talmud*, now more than twelve hundred Years old, declares, That their *Meſſias* at his coming, ſhall be put to death. The Author of the *Chaldee* Paraphraſe, who died before *Chriſt* was born, applies that Account of *Iſaiah*, to the Murder of the *Meſſiah* by the *Jews*. R. *Simeon*, in the next Age after, cries out, *Wo be to the Men of* Iſrael, *for they ſhall ſlay the* Meſſias: GOD *ſhall ſend his Son in Man's Fleſh, to cleanſe them, and they ſhall murder him.* *R. Hadarſan* proves out of *Daniel*, That, when the *Meſſias* ſhall have preach'd half ſeven Years, he ſhall be ſlain. The ſame is confirmed by the *Jews* ordinary Comment upon the Pſalms; and this agrees exactly with the Account given by us *Chriſtians*, and our Evangeliſts. The three Hours Darkneſs at his Death, *Euſebius* affirms to be reported by ſeveral *Heathen* Authors; and among others, cites one *Phlegon*, a very exact Perſon, who places it in the fourth Year of the two hundred and ſecond *Olympiad*, which falls in with the eighteenth of *Tiberius*; the very Year wherein our Saviour ſuffered: Nay, he is ſo exceeding particular, as to name the ſame Hours of the Day, which our Evangeliſts do. *Æſculus*, an old *Aſtronomer*, confirms this matter, and proves withal, That accord-

Lib. de Spe.

Hadar. in Dan.

Midraſh Tehill.

Euſeb. Chr. A. D. 82. Phleg.

Tralion. l. 24. Chr. 4. 4. Olym. 202.

Orig. contr. Celſ l. 6.

according to the Poſition of the *Sun* and *Moon*, there could not then happen any Natural *Eclipſe*. *Dionyſius* the *Areopagite*, made the ſame Obſervation upon the very Day of our Lord's Paſſion, being then five and twenty Years old, and yet well skilled in *Aſtronomy*, as appears from his own Books. And *Lucian* of *Antioch*, uſed frequently to appeal to the *Gentiles*'s own Hiſtory, for a ſufficient Teſtimony of theſe things.

Suid. in Jeſus. Tertull. Apolog. Dion. Ar. in Ep. *Lucian. apud Euſeb.*

The next thing to be ſpoke of, is *Jeſus*'s Reſurrection: A Point of all others moſt important, and therefore exactly foretold by the Prophets, and promiſed by *Chriſt* himſelf, while converſing upon Earth. This was imply'd in all thoſe Predictions of Glory, and Triumph, and Joy, to *Chriſt*'s Church after his Paſſion: For thoſe could never have receiv'd a juſt accompliſhment, had not he riſen again from the Dead. Both the Thing, and the Time of it, were prefigured in *Jonas*: The former was foretold by thoſe words of *David*, *My fleſh ſhall reſt in hope, for thou wilt not ſuffer thy Holy One to ſee corruption.* The latter by *Hoſea*, *After two days will he revive us, in the third day he will raiſe us up, and we ſhall live in his ſight.* To theſe Predictions of the Prophets, *Jeſus* often adds his own Promiſe, for the comfort of his Diſciples; though at that time his Meaning was not ſo perfectly underſtood by them. Now if this Promiſe had extended to ſome very diſtant period, (like that of *Mahomet*'s Reviving after eight hundred Years) though there had been no Intention to perform it, yet credulous Men might have been held in long Expectation and Suſpenſe, without any poſſibility of detecting the Cheat. But when *Jeſus* confin'd Himſelf to three Days, it cannot be ſuppos'd, that he was not in very good

Jon. 2. Pſal. 16. 9, 10. Hoſ. 6. 2. Alcoran. Azoar. 17.

earneſt; for otherwiſe, the Falſhood of his Word would ſoon have diſcovered it ſelf. And therefore we will obſerve, what Proof there is that he was really as good as his Word. And here we have the Teſtimony of Men, whoſe only Hope, and Confidence, and Happineſs, depended entirely upon the Truth of this Matter. His diſmay'd and afflicted Diſciples, who relate many Appearances made to them by their Maſter, in his own proper Human Body, after his
Joh. 20. Return from the Dead. That to *Mary Magdalen*, who with other Devout Women, came with Spices and Ointments to the Sepulcher.
Mark 16. That to all thoſe Women together, in their re-
Matt. 28. turn home. That to *Simon Peter* alone. That to the two Diſciples travelling to *Emaus*. That
1 Cor. 15. to all the Apoſtles aſſembled together privately, and with the Doors ſhut, for fear of the *Jews*.
Luke 24. That to the ſame Company, eight Days after, when *Thomas* was with them; at which time he eat and drank with them, and ſuffered his Body
John 20. to be handled, and proved by them. That to
John 21. *Peter* and *John*, and other Diſciples, fiſhing at
Matt. 28. the Sea of *Tiberias*. That to the Eleven Apoſtles
1 Cor. 15. upon Mount *Tabor*. That to five hundred Brethren at once, mentioned by St. *Paul*. That to
Acts 1. St. *James*, as the ſame Apoſtle teſtifies. That
1 Cor. 15. to all his Apoſtles, Diſciples, and Friends, when he aſcended from the Mount of *Olives* into Heaven. To which we may add, That after his Aſcenſion, to St. *Paul* himſelf.

Theſe are all recorded in Scripture, as Appearances, though not to all indifferently, yet ſo many, and to ſuch numbers, as were competent and proper Witneſſes: and ſuch Appearances as there could be no deceit in; For *He ſhewed himſelf*, ſays the Text, *by many infallible proofs*;

proofs; ſuch as *eating and drinking* together, *and ſpeaking the things which pertain to the Kingdom of God, for the ſpace of forty days.* Acts 1. And why ſhould the Truth of theſe Witneſſes be ſuſpected, who had ſuch convictions to ſatisfy themſelves, whoſe All was concerned in not being impoſed upon, and who could have no temptation to impoſe upon others? What Satisfaction could they take in deviſing Fables of this kind? What Comfort would his dead Body concealed among them afford? The *Jews* confeſs the empty Sepulcher, but ſay his Diſciples ſtole him away: And is this probable? that Men ſo dejected, ſo feeble, ſo apprehenſive of danger, that they durſt not be known to meet, nay not to be ſeen out of doors, till inform'd by the Women, who had viſited the Sepulcher, that their Lord was riſen, ſhould convey away his Body from a ſtrong Guard of Souldiers? Suppoſing them courageous enough for ſuch an Attempt, could they poſſibly have ſucceeded in it? How ſhould they break open the Doors, burſt the Seal and Faſtenings of the Tomb, and carry their Lord off, with ſuch deliberation, as to leave the *Grave-Cloaths* wrapped up, and laid by in order, never to be ſeen or heard, and the Body never to be found after? But allowing all this poſſible, what Profit, what Pleaſure or Conſolation could they propoſe to themſelves by it? But eſpecially, what account can we give of that ſudden and mighty change in theſe Men's Temper, and Behaviour, upon that occaſion? For They who before kept cloſe, and were afraid of every thing, now came forth publickly, and with undaunted Confidence proclaimed this Reſurrection, in the Hearing, and to the Face of their bittereſt Enemies; affirming that they had ſeen

him, ſpoken with him, handled him, converſed with him as before; and for confirmation of all this, they were ready to lay down their own Lives. This is ſuch an alteration, that Life and Death are not more diſtant more diſtant, than theſe Apoſtles, from what they had been but few Days before: Could all this, think you, proceed from a dead Body, got into their poſſeſſion by ſtealth? Could the ſight of a Body ſo mangled, and torn, and deformed, as our Lord's upon the Croſs, have yielded ſuch aſtoniſhing degrees of Comfort? It is never to be imagined.

And therefore *Pilate*, conſidering theſe Circumſtances, the unlikelihood of the Body being ſtollen, and the effects this Reſurrection had upon *Jeſus* his Diſciples, examined into the matter, and got the whole truth out of the Guard. The Riſing of *Jeſus* before their Eyes, the terrible Earth-quake, and the opening of the the Sepulcher, the Terrours they had been in, which made them deſert their Poſt, and the wicked Policy of the *Jewiſh* Rulers, who had put that ill-contriv'd Story into their Mouths, thereby to ſtifle, if poſſible, the Belief of this Reſurrection. All theſe Particulars *Pilate* tranſmitted by Letter to his Maſter *Tiberius* (then Emperour) to *Rome*; and withal, the Examinations and Confeſſions of ſeveral, who had ſpoken with ſuch as roſe at the ſame time, and appeared to their Acquaintance in *Jeruſalem*, and gave them aſſurance of *Jeſus* his Reſurrection. Theſe Informations made ſuch impreſſion upon *Tiberius*, that he communicated them to the Senate, and moved, That *Jeſus* might be admitted into the number of the *Roman* Gods; declaring his own Readineſs to give the Imperial Suffrage and Aſſent

Aſſent to ſuch a Decree. And upon the Senate's refuſal, he did not only expreſs his Diſpleaſure, but gave free Liberty for all that would, to believe in *Jeſus*, and prohibited all his Officers upon pain of Death, to moleſt any ſuch, for their good affection and zeal to that Name. This *Tertullian* aſſerts of his own knowledge; who, living in *Rome*, and being a celebrated Pleader, in regard to his Attainments and Quality, had opportunity of inſpecting the Records, and did peruſe them accordingly. And *Hegeſippus*, another ancient Writer, delivers the ſame Account, neither of whom could ever be gain-ſaid by the *Gentiles* in the Point. *Tertul.* Apol. *Hegeſ.* l. 1. *Euſeb.* l. 4. ca. 21.

But neither was this Opinion of *Jeſus* riſing from the dead, entertained by *Gentiles* only: for ſeveral *Jews* of great Learning and Authority then alive, believ'd it likewiſe, though they had not the Grace to become *Chriſtians* upon it. This is evident from the Story of *Joſephus*, written not above forty Years after our Lord's Paſſion; who taking occaſion to ſpeak of *Jeſus*, and his Diſciples, after having mention'd his Crucifixion by *Pilate*, at the inſtance of the *Jews*; and that, notwithſtanding all that ignominy and ſuffering, his Diſciples did not ceaſe to love and honour him ſtill; adds, That as a Reward of their conſtant Affection, he returned to Life the third day, and appeared to them again. Which words are ſo delivered, as not to ſpeak the Hiſtorian's Senſe, ſo much as the common acknowledged Opinion of all ſober Perſons at that time. For there were then many *Chriſtians* yet living, who had ſeen and ſpoken with *Jeſus*, after his Reſurrection; and infinite *Jews*, who from their Kindred and Friends, that had

had been Eye-witneſſes, muſt needs have heard an Account of it.

I know not whether after ſuch Evidence of our Lord's Reſurrection, it be neceſſary to add any thing more: For they who believe, that *Jeſus* when dead, was able to raiſe himſelf to Life again, cannot in reaſon make any difficulty in believing Him able to aſcend into Heaven. But of this too St. *Luke* mentions an hundred and twenty Witneſſes; who, forty Days after his Reſurrection, ſaw him bodily aſcend thither from the top of Mount *Olivet*; and beſides this, a Viſion of Angels; and to take off all ſcruple, he names the Place and Day, when and where it happened. He ſets down the very words ſpoken by *Jeſus* at his Aſcenſion. He tells the manner of it, and how a Cloud receiv'd him out of their ſight. He declares what the Company did, whither they went, and where they remained, after their departure from thence. In ſhort, he is ſo particular in all the circumſtances, that it had been the eaſieſt thing in the world, for the Enemies of our Religion to have diſproved and expoſed him, if any of thoſe circumſtances had not been true. And it concerned him to be punctual, becauſe he had to deal with Men ſpightful and vigilant; and the Falſhood, if any ſuch had been detected, muſt have fallen heavy upon him, and thoſe of the ſame profeſſion with him.

Luke 24. Acts 1.

To conclude: This Head then, ſo far as concerns the Birth, and Life, and Doctrine, and Miracles, and Death, and Reſurrection, and Aſcenſion of the Bleſſed *Jeſus*: Since nothing of all theſe came to paſs, which was not foretold by GOD's Prophets long before; nor any thing was ſignify'd before, concerning the *Meſſias*,

ſias, which was not moſt punctually accompliſhed in and by *Jeſus*, during his abode upon Earth: We may moſt certainly aſſure our ſelves that as GOD can neither foretell nor atteſt any Falſhood; ſo theſe things, which appear to have been ſo evidently predicted and fulfilled, are demonſtrative Proofs, That our *Jeſus* was the true *Meſſias*. It remains now only to ſhew this yet more fully, by the Conſideration of ſome Events, whereby he declared his Almighty Power and Truth, after his Aſcent into Heaven. And this ſhall be the Subject of our next Section.

SECT. III.

How Jeſus proved his Deity after his Return to Heaven.

THis Head is capable of being branched out into almoſt infinite particulars. For, who indeed can recount the many wonderful inſtances, by which our Lord, exalted to the Throne of his Father, hath evidenced himſelf to the world? But for order and brevity's ſake, I ſhall confine my ſelf to thoſe only, wherein his Love and Care for his Church, the accompliſhment of his Promiſes, and the Juſtification of what he taught and foretold, while upon earth, are more immediately concern'd.

Here then I ſhall conſider, (1.) The Protection and Increaſe of that little Flock Chriſt left in the World: (2.) The Actions of the Apoſtles. (3.) The Evangeliſts and their Writings. (4.) The Martyrs and their Sufferings for the Truth. (5.) The conqueſt of the Devil and his Kingdom. (6.) The juſt and exemplary Vengeance executed upon the Enemies of

of Chriſt. And (7.) The fulfilling all thoſe Prophecies delivered by him, while here upon Earth.

1. For the *Firſt* of theſe, We may remember, how very ſmall the beginnings of this Church were, at our Lord's Aſcenſion. St. *Luke* deſcribes them returning from Mount *Olivet* back to *Jeruſalem*, continuing in prayer together, and inexpectation how God would deal with them; The City and People bent againſt them, The Name of Jeſus odious and deſpiſed; No Subſtance of their own to ſupport them, nor any powerful Friends to aſſiſt and countenance them. But while this poor and feeble handful of People were thus divided between fears and hopes, and in likelihood of falling under extream diſtreſs; behold, on the tenth day, Jeſus performed his promiſe of ſending the Comforter, the Holy Ghoſt. By whom, beſides the inward joy and incredible ſatisfaction of mind which they felt in believing they were inſpired with courage, to expoſe themſelves, and preach publickly to the World: They received the Gift of Tongues, enabling them to converſe with People of all Nations, Wiſdom and wonderful illumination in the ſublimeſt Myſteries; Skill to teach the ignorant, and convince their Adverſaries; The Gift of Prophecy to ſee and foretel things to come; The Power of working Miracles in confirmation of the Truth; And, as a taſte and pledge of their future ſucceſs, they ſaw three thouſand converted, by a Sermon of St. *Peter*'s, that very day. This increaſe came on ſo faſt, that in forty years the Heathens themſelves confeſs all parts of the World to have been full of Chriſtians. And not long after *Tertullian* declares, that they had vaſt multitudes of Proſelytes in all Cities

Acts 1.

Acts, 11.

Sueton in Ner. Tacit. Hiſt. 5.

ties and Countreys, in all conditions and degrees of men. That, would their Religion diſpenſe with the Duties of their Civil Station, there was no need of making War upon their Perſecutors; for if they ſhould only ſtand ſtill and not aſſiſt them, the Empire could not ſupport it ſelf without them. So that we ſee how prodigiouſly this little Flock grew, in the compaſs of One Age, notwithſtanding all the violent and wicked means uſed to ſuppreſs and extinguiſh it. Which were ſo great, that all ſorts of Crimes put together were not treated with ſo much rigour, as that ſingle offence (for ſuch it was looked upon) of confeſſing Chriſt, and his Religion. And yet there was no concurrence of humane means to promote this Increaſe, nothing to flatter men's natural Inclinations, no temporal advantage to be gained by coming in. The Terms, upon which Jeſus invited men, were ſuch as theſe. *Repent and be baptiſed*; *In the World ye ſhall have tribulation*; *They ſhall ſcourge and perſecute you*; *The time cometh, that whoſoever killeth you ſhall think that he doth God ſervice.* *If a man will be my Diſciple, let him hate Father and Mother, and Wife and Children, yea and his own life, and take up his Croſs, and follow me.* Jeſus profeſſes, that the Event of his coming ſhould be, not to *bring Peace* and eaſe, but Fire and Sword, and Conflicts, and Enmity between neareſt Relations. And yet, with theſe diſcouraging Offers, by this Doctrine ſo croſs to our natural Appetites, by Poor and in themſelves contemptible Officers, did Jeſus in a few years gain more hearts, than ever the moſt powerful Monarch did by all the temporal Allurements to his ſervice poſſible to be propoſed. All which evidently ſhews, that the Means of eſtabliſhing

Matth. 3. John 16. Matth. 10. Luke 14.

bliſhing this Kingdom were ſupernatural and that his power could not be leſs than divine, who contrary to all reaſon of man, in ſo ſhort a time, gained ſo miraculous, ſo univerſal a Conqueſt.

2. The next Conſideration, relating to the Apoſtles, is in ſome reſpect more wonderful than the former; That theſe few, mean, poor, illiterate men ſhould be aſſigned to ſo great a work, as the Converſion of all Nations, and make their party good againſt the Power, and Learning and Malice of the whole World; That they ſhould not only contend with ſuch Enemies ſucceſsfully, but direct and manage the affairs of their Maſters Kingdom with ſuch wonderful Addreſs; That from ſuch inſufficiency and ſlowneſs of underſtanding and improvement, as they plainly betrayed by the Queſtions put to Jeſus juſt before his Aſcent into Heaven, the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt, ſhould all on the ſudden qualify them for the higheſt myſteries and moſt difficult undertakings, which a Converſation of three years and the long repeated inſtructions of their Maſter had left them ſo incapable of; that they ſhould ſubdue the Great without power, and confute the moſt exquiſite Philoſophers without Learning or Study; that they ſhould do Miracles, not only to the wonder, but even the terrour of the beholders; Examples whereof we have infinite in the Book of *Acts*, and ſuch as, had they been forgeries, muſt needs have been ſoon detected, and would have effectually diſcredited them and their Religion for ever. It is therefore obſervable, that none of their Enemies ever went about to deny the matter of fact; but only had recourſe to that old ſhift of imputing them to the power of Magick. This was the pretence

of

of *Julian* and others; But They, who have ſtudied that Art moſt carefully, have been moſt free in declaring the extream vanity of it. And *Julian* at laſt, awakened by Calamities, was forced to cry out, *Viciſti Galilæe.* Acknowledging the truth of Chriſt's Miracles and his followers, and the folly of his own fruitleſs oppoſition againſt him and his Religion. Plin. Hiſt. Nat. l. 30. c. 1. Zoſim. in Juli. Niceph. l. 10. c. 35.

Thus proceeded the Apoſtles, *Preaching every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with ſigns following.* This teſtimony and aſſiſtance gave them boldneſs, ſo that no terrour or threats, no danger or perſecution could ſtop their courſe. St. *Paul*'s profeſſion was true of them all, that *neither tribulation, nor diſtreſs, nor famine, nor nakedneſs, nor peril, nor ſword could ſeparate them from the love and ſervice of their Maſter, but in all theſe things they were more than Conquerors:* Nor did this diſpoſition forſake them at the time of their Deaths, which they met in the moſt terrible ſhape, with incredible chearfulneſs; Rejoycing to ſeal their Doctrine with their Blood: Never ſo full of confidence, and courage, and conſolation, as at that hour; Never ſo joyfully owning their Lord, and diſcourſing of Rewards, and Crowns, as at the laſt inſtant of their Combat. All which manifeſtly proves the actions of theſe men not to have proceeded from a humane Spirit; but to have been inſpired and perform'd by the divine force and wonderful aſſiſtance of that Lord and God, whom they moſt truly confeſſed and preached. Mark, 16. Rom. 8.

3. Let us, in the *Third* place, obſerve the Evangeliſts, who have left us an account of our Lord's Doctrine and Actions. And here it is worth our remark how different a method of

of delivering his Laws and Precepts our Lord took, from the generality of Law-makers. They procure them authority by publishing their own Laws, and promulging them in their Life-time; so did *Lycurgus* and *Solon*, and *Numa*, and *Mahomet*, and many others. But JESUS passed out of the World silently, without pomp or ostentation; he left nothing written by himself, but exerted his divine power in directing the pen of his Evangelists. Two of these were Apostles, and wrote what themselves had seen: The other two Disciples, who set down what they received from the Apostles. One of the Gospels was written in the *Hebrew* tongue, to perpetuate the actions of Jesus in the Country where they were done; The other Three in the *Greek* Language, then generally used and understood; to spread the knowledge of them throughout the World. The Writers composed them in different Countreys, far distant from each other, and yet all agree in the substance of their Narratives: They wrote at different times, and yet the latter does not reprove or correct any thing in the former. They published these Accounts, while many were yet alive, who knew the facts: and many more, who desired to disprove and stifle them. They are so particular as to set down the very time, and day and hour, the place, the village, the house, the names of the Persons concerned; And the more of these Circumstances, the easier were the Confutation, if they had not been true. They published their Writings in their own Lifetime, and preached the same things that they wrote. These were received, after due examination, and especially upon the approbation

St. Matthew's.

tion of the Apoſtles: They did not, like other Authors, add or alter in any following Editions; nor correct any one paſſage put out at firſt: And they gave theſe Writings ſuch Authority, as no Prince could ever yet obtain for the credit of his ſanctions; which was, to lay their lives down in Juſtification of what they had written.

Their manner of writing is plain and ſincere, without art or ornament; They flatter none, not even Jeſus himſelf: But at the ſame time they confeſs him to be God, they publiſh his infirmities as Man; His hunger and thirſt, his wearineſs and ſleep, his weeping and his fear, his agonies and amazing heavineſs of Soul. They diſſemble not the defects even of the chiefeſt Apoſtles, though ſuch as might ſeem to diſcredit and bear hard upon them. They tell the frequent Rebukes of Chriſt, their dullneſs of underſtanding, the very impertinent queſtions they asked him; the Incredulity of *Thomas*, the ambition of *James* and *John*, the envy and emulation of them all. And, which is ſtill a farther proof of their Sincerity, they leaſt of all ſpare themſelves, or their more particular friends. St. *Matthew* is only by himſelf ſtyled *Matthew the Publican*: St. *Mark*, who attended St. *Peter*, and is thought to have written, as He dictated to him, is more full than any of the reſt, in deſcribing that Apoſtle's denyal of Jeſus, and more reſerved than any in the account of his Repentance; St. *Luke* who was companion to St. *Paul*, hath recorded the difference between him and *Barnabas*, and his conſent and concurrence to the murder of St. *Stephen*. So that we may plainly ſee, they were men of honeſt Principles, who, as they durſt not deviſe any thing of their own heads; ſo they made a Conſcience of con- Matth. 10.

cealing any part of the truth, in favour of themſelves, or of any other perſon whatſoever.

Theſe Writings were publiſhed and received for undoubted truth, by all that lived in the ſame Age, and were acquainted with the particulars related in them. Copies of them innumerable were diſperſed, and preſerved in infinite hands, with all the care and reverence due to the Word of God. They were read in the publick Aſſemblies of all Countreys, expounded and taught by all Paſtors, commented upon by Holy Fathers from time to time. So that we may reſt ſecure, that theſe Writings have ſuffered no material Corruption; ſince ſo many Copies could not poſſibly be depraved, without oppoſition or diſcovery: And our Bibles at this day give us the ſame Sentences and Texts of Scripture, as the Fathers who then quoted them in their writings, had them in the firſt Ages of the Chriſtian Church. So that of this we have no more ground to doubt, than whether *Rome*, or *Jeruſalem*, or any other City famous in Story, and well known at this day, be the ſame place now, which Authors treated of under the ſame Name heretofore.

For the Credit and Confirmation of theſe Evangeliſts and their Writtings, God ſo ordered the matter, that infinite perſons (who are upon that account called Martyrs) ſhould teſtify to the Truth of the Goſpel with their Blood. A Teſtimony, which no other Religion could ever boaſt of, Except, that ſome few *Jews* about the *Maccabees* time were injuriouſly put to death, (when God for the ſins of that Nation gave them up to Tyrants.) But for the numbers there is no compariſon, there being more Chriſtians put to death for their belief in two Months,

Months, than were of the *Jews* in two thouſand years before Chriſt's coming. Which yet muſt needs ſeem ſtrange, if we reflect, that the *Jewiſh* Religion was every whit as oppoſite to the *Pagan*, as the Doctrines of the Chriſtian are. But thus our Maſter's words were fulfilled, *I come not to bring Peace, but a Sword.* And, *Behold I ſend you forth as Sheep among Wolves*; to be worried and torn in pieces, without provocation, without mercy. Now in theſe almoſt incredible ſufferings of the Primitive Chriſtians, it is wonderful to obſerve, what infinite multitudes of each Sex, of all ages, and degrees, and conditions, ſuffered daily for the Truth's ſake! What inſupportable and unuſual Torments, ſuch as were never heard or thought of before, the Wicked malice and Tyranny of their Enemies invented for the tryal of their conſtancy and patience. And yet what invincible Courage, and unſpeakable alacrity, the Chriſtians expreſſed in bearing theſe Afflictions! Such as their very Enemies could not forbear aſcribing to ſome Divine power and ſupernatural aſſiſtance.

'Tis true, we cannot with any good conſequence draw any general Concluſion from the Extremity of the Suffering, to the Goodneſs of the Cauſe. But, though ill men may endure as well as good, yet they do not behave themſelves under it alike. For, as *Tertullian* argues, "Every evil action is naturally attend- Apolog.
"ed with fear or ſhame. The Malefactors,
"who love to commit evil, are deſirous to con-
"ceal that inclination. They tremble when
"taken; they deny all, when accuſed; and
"ſcarce can be racked into a Confeſſion. They
"lament their hard fate when condemned, and

"curſe their ill Stars for ſuch an unfortunate "end. But what does the Chriſtian do, "Is any of them aſhamed? Or does he re- "pent, when apprehended, except for not be- "ing apprehended ſooner? If he be charged as "a Chriſtian, he glories in the Charge; if this "be his Accuſation, he is not ſollicitous to ſhift "it off; if he be asked the queſtion, he readily "owns the thing; if he be condemned, he "thanks God for it. What new ſort of Evil is "this, that hath none of the natural conſe- "quences of Evil; no fear, no ſhame, no eva- "ſion, or repentance, no ſorrow, or murmur- "ing, or complaint? What Evil, (ſays he) can "this be, where Guilt is matter of Joy, where "Accuſation is an Honour, and Puniſhment is "eſteemed the greateſt Happineſs? This is *Tertullian*'s reaſoning upon the caſe; and certainly nothing can be a clearer proof of the Omnipotence of Jeſus, than that impregnable Fortitude, which above all the force of humane Nature and Reaſon, he inſpired into ſuch numbers of Martyrs for the Truth.

5. I come now to obſerve the demonſtrations of Jeſus his divine Power, upon the Kingdom of Darkneſs and wicked Spirits: Which ſufficiently appears, from the anſwers of Oracles after Chriſt's Birth, conveyed to Poſterity by Heathen writers themſelves. *Euſebius*, hath produced many in his ſixth Book, *de præparatione Evangelica*, eſpecially from *Porphyry*, who introduces *Apollo* crying out, that *the honour and wiſdom of his Oracles had now quite forſaken him.* So fully were thoſe Prophecies made good in Jeſus, of bringing all the Idols to Confuſion. The wicked Spirits owned this power of his, while he was yet upon Earth;

Con-

Confeſſing him to be the Son and Holy one of God; and begging, that when he dipoſſeſs'd the *Dæmoniack's*, they might not be tormented, nor ſent back into Hell, but ſuffered to wander in Mountains and go into herds of Swine. And theſe acknowledgments they made publickly, and, by what happened afterwards, ſhewed, that they were diſpoſed of at his pleaſure. This appeared yet farther after Jeſus his death; For, upon the publication of his Goſpel throughout the World, the Oracles, which before were frequent in moſt Countreys, were univerſally put to ſilence. Of this we need no Evidence but the Confeſſions of the Heathen themſelves, *Lucan*, *Juvenal*, *Strabo*, and *Plutarch*, own the fact. And the laſt labours hard to aſſign reaſons for it. But the two chief fixed upon by him are manifeſtly inſufficient. For when he aſcribes it to the increaſe of Wiſdom in the World, which rendred ſuch Anſwers of the Gods not any longer neceſſary; he contradicts himſelf, and thoſe Examples of the Antients, which he declared in his *Lives* not parallell'd by any in After-ages: And when he imputes it to thoſe Spirits waxing feeble or dying with length of time; he forgets, that immaterial Subſtances cannot grow infirm, or old, neither can they dye. So that we are ſtill to ſeek for ſome other Cauſe, and ſhall find none ſo ſatisfactory as that aſſigned by St. *John*, *For this cauſe the Son of God was manifeſted, that he might deſtroy the works of the Devil.* And, among thoſe works, none were of more pernicious conſequence than the Idolatrous Superſtitions, and vain deluſions of Oracles, the ſeeking to them as Gods, and depending upon them for future Contingences.

Mark. 5.

Juven. Sat. 6. Strab. l. 9. Plut. de perf. Orac.

1 John. 3. 8.

This power over the infernal Kingdom and it's Miniſters was not confined to the ſingle Perſon of Jeſus himſelf, but by Him communicated to his Servants and Followers: Thus it was to the Twelve, and to the Seventy in his Life-time; and, after his Death, the Commiſſion was greatly inlarged. Inſomuch that *Tertullian* makes a bold Challenge to the Heathen Magiſtrates and Perſecutors of his time, and offers to put his own and Fellow-Chriſtians lives upon that Iſſue, "That he or they could con-"trole thoſe Spirits, whom the *Romans* wor-"ſhipped as Gods; that he would force them "and their Prieſts, before any Heathen Tri-"bunal, to confeſs themſelves Devils, and ac-"knowledge Chriſt to be the Wiſdom and "Power of God; that he is in Heaven, and "ſhall return to judge the World; that they "are in Dread of that horrible judgment for "their wickedneſs, that they fear God in "Chriſt, and Chriſt in God, and are, ſore a-"gainſt their wills, made ſubject to his Ser-"vants. This proffer made to the Perſecutors then in *Rome*, we may be very confident would have been accepted, had not the Enemy of Truth been ſenſible, that the Experiment was dangerous, and would turn to his greater confuſion. Nor did the Word and Command only, but even the bare preſence of Chriſtians, put a terrour into thoſe Spirits of darkneſs. *Lactantius* ſays, that upon a poor Chriſtian Servant attending his Maſter to a Heathen Temple, the Idols cry'd out, that nothing could be done, ſo long as that Chriſtian was by. *Euſebius* relates a like anſwer, from *Apollo* to *Diocleſian*. And *Porphyry* ſays, of the Plague of *Meſſina*, *that* Æſculapius *and all the other Gods were departed*

Matth. 10. Luke, 10. Apolog.

Inſtit. L. 4. c. 19. Præp. Evang. l. 5. Porph. L. 1. cont. Chriſt. Euſeb. ubi ſupra.

departed from that City, upon the coming in of the Chriſtians. For ſince men began to worſhip Jeſus, there was no good to be had from their Gods. And though this was intended as a malicious inſinuation, to render the Chriſtians odious, and expoſe them to the fury of their Enemies; yet the Confeſſion is very remarkable; and gives us the true cauſe of the utter overthrow of Oracles throughout the whole Earth.

6. My next proof of this divine power and juſtice concerns the ſevere and memorable vengeance executed upon the Enemies of *Jeſus* and his Religion. And here I might inſtance in the dreadful Calamities and wretched deaths of *Herod* the Great; of his Son *Archelaus*; of *Herod Antipas*, the murderer of St. *John Baptiſt*, and derider of our Lord at his Paſſion; of that other *Herod* who ſlew St. *James* and impriſoned St. *Peter*; of *Pontius Pilate*, who condemned Jeſus to be crucify'd; of *Caligula*, and *Nero*, and the many other *Roman* Emperors, who were as viſibly diſtinguiſhed by their miſerable afflictions, as they had diſtinguiſhed themſelves by their implacable hatred and perſecution of the Chriſtians. I might alſo obſerve, that few or no ſuch examples occur in Hiſtory, ſince the Empire became Chriſtian under *Conſtantine*, except *Julian* the Apoſtate, *Valens* the *Arian*, and ſome others notorious and deteſtable for their wickedneſs. But I content my ſelf with one eminent inſtance of Juſtice upon a whole Nation, the moſt obſervable of any that ever happened in the World: That I mean upon *Jeruſalem*, and the Jewiſh people, for their obſtinacy and barbarity to Jeſus, at his Death and Paſſion.

Matth. 2. 14. Luke, 23. Acts 12.

Joſephus, and *Philo*, and other Hiſtorians, who were either contemporary with, or lived

Joſeph: Antiq. L. 19. C. 2.

De Bell. Jud. L. 2. & 3. Phil. in Flac. & Leg. Corn. Tac.

immediately after our Lord, declare the Calamities inflicted upon that People, to be past all power of Expression. What they suffered by *Pilate* under *Tiberius*; by *Petronius* under *Caligula*; by *Cumanus* under *Claudius*; by *Festus* and *Albinus* under *Nero*; and, when these Cruelties had moved them to rebel against their *Romans*, by their utter ruin and extirpation under *Vespasian* and *Titus*. *Josephus* an Eye-witness of their miseries, tells us of eleven hundred thousand slain; fourscore and seventeen thousand taken alive, and either put to death afterwards in publick triumphs, or set openly to sale for slaves, to be scattered all over the World. In this universal Calamity it is observable, that, at the same time and place, in which they had put Jesus to death, that is, in *Jerusalem*, and at their Feast of the Passeover, when their whole Nation was assembled from all parts of the Countrey, they received this subversion from that very *Roman* Power, to which by common Cry they had appealed from Jesus before. As they had apprehended Jesus, who entred to his Passion from the Mount of *Olives*, so *Titus* upon the same Mount first opened his Siege against the City: As they dragged Jesus from *Caiaphas* to *Pilate*, so were they now haled from *John* to *Simon*, the heads of two contending Factions, and scourged and tormented before their Tribunals: As they had caused Jesus to be dirided, and buffeted and villanously abused by the Souldiers; so were their Nobles and Principal Rulers scornfully used, scourged, and crucified, by *Roman* Souldiers: Which last indignity of Crucifixion was never practised upon the *Jews* of Condition, before the death of Jesus.

De Bell. L. 5. & 28.

But in this War, *Josephus* acquaints us, that five hundred

hundred of his Nation were put to this opprobrious punishment at once: So that there was neither room left for Crosses, nor Bodies left to fill them. This dreadful misery fell upon the *Jews*, about forty years after our Lord's Ascension, when they had given unpardonable proofs of an obdurate and perverse Spirit; when they had slain St. *Stephen* and St. *James*, and banished St. *Peter* and St. *Paul*, and Others, who in vain laboured to convert them. And yet so Providence ordered it, that the Christians who lived at *Jerusalem* had retired, a little before the siege, to *Pella*, and so escaped the common destruction, which overtook that City and it's Inhabitants. The account of the Jewish War in *Josephus* shews how their affairs declined, and grew every day more deplorable. When the War was at an end, *Titus* sent a Present of sixteen thousand *Jews* to his Father, to be put to death at *Rome*, by sundry kinds of Torments. Others he diverted his *Romans* with; and *Josephus* saw two thousand five hundred in one day murdered in combat with one another, and devoured by Wild Beasts at the Emperour's appointment: Others in *Antioch* and other great Cities were made Fuel for their fires of Triumph; Others were sold to slavery, others condemned to the Mines and Quarries for their Lives. After this, under *Trajan*, *Marcus Turbo* in *Africa*, and *Lucius Quintus* in the East, slew so many *Jews*, that all Histories agree, the multitude of the slain cannot be expresst. After this under *Adrian*, *Julius Severus* was sent to extinguish the remains of that wretched People, who destroyed nine hundred and eighty Towns and Villages, and slew five hundred and fourscore thousand of that race in one day: He beat down

the

the City of *Jeruſalem*, ſo that of all their antient Buildings, there was not one Stone left upon another: He rebuilt part of it again, and cauſed it to be inhabited by Gentiles only: He changed the name to *Ælia*, in honour of the Emperour; drove all that progeny out, with a ſevere injunction never to return, or ſo much as look back to their Countrey again. And thus was that dreadful Imprecation accompliſhed to the uttermoſt, which the *Jews* had ſo ſolemnly bound upon themſelves and their poſterity, when Jeſus ſtood before *Pilate*'s Judgment-ſeat; crying out with one voice, *His Blood be on Us and on our Children.*

Matth. 27. 25.

7. This notorious and exemplary Puniſhment, or rather Caſting off, of the Jewiſh People, which before was God's Peculiar, is an eminent proof of my laſt Conſideration: The fulfilling our Lords words and Prophecies. It being foretold in moſt expreſs and awakening terms, That all the innocent blood of God's Servants, ſhed in former Ages, ſhould be required at *the hands of that generation*; that *their houſe ſhould be left deſolate*; That of their ſumptuous Buildings, there ſhould not one *Stone be left upon another*; That the days were coming, when their *Enemies ſhould come upon* Jeruſalem, *and caſt a trench about her, and compaſs it round, and keep it in on every ſide, and caſt it down to the ground:* The Signs and particular ſeaſon whereof he gives his Diſciples warning of, *When you ſhall ſee* Jeruſalem *compaſſed with Armies, then know, that the deſolation thereof is nigh. For theſe are the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled. They ſhall fall by the edge of the Sword, and ſhall be led away captive into all Nations: For there ſhall be great diſtreſs in the land, and wrath upon this People:*

Matth. 23.
Matth. 24. Luke 19.
Luke 21. 20.

ple: And Jeruſalem *ſhall be troden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled.* Now theſe Predictions were delivered at a time, when the *Jews* ſeem'd moſt ſecure, and in perfect amity with the *Romans.* As they likewiſe continued, when the Evangeliſts committed them to writing: They never had leſs cauſe to ſuſpect ſo dreadful a Change; And yet the certain foreſight our Lord had of it, was not only juſtified abundantly by the Event, but ſignified by thoſe Tears of Pity, which he ſhed over that City, and the warning given to her Daughters from the Croſs, not to *weep for Him but for their Children*, in regard of the miſeries, which ſhould ſoon after befal them. And it is obſervable, that about a hundred years after *Phlegon* a celebrated Chronologer, and ſervant to *Adrian* the Emperour, obſerving the very punctual accompliſhment of theſe Prophecies, declared, that never any man foretold future Events, with ſo great certainty and Exactneſs, as Jeſus had done. Which obſervation, though reſtrained by that Author, to the ſingle caſe of the *Jews*, (a ſufficient demonſtration, though we could produce no other of our Lord's preſcience and divine Spirit,) yet is confirmed to Us Chriſtians, by many other inſtances, which it is not poſſible for humane Learning, or prudent conjecture, or any thing leſs than God, to have had any inſight into. Such are the foretelling his own Death, with the Time, Manner, and all the Circumſtances of it; the fears and flight of his Diſciples, though they ſo ſolemnly reſolved and proteſted the contrary; the three denyals of St. *Peter*; the Treachery and Impenitence of *Judas*; the Time of his Reſurrection; the ſending of the Holy Ghoſt; And many other predictions not

Luke, 23. 28.

Phleg. Tral. L. Annal.

See Orig. cont. Celſ. L. 2.

not yet fulfilled, even then, when the Diſciples publiſhed them to the World: And which, if not preciſely agreeable in their Events, had been the greateſt and moſt irreparable damage, poſſible for the Credit of thoſe Writers, and the common Cauſe of Chriſtianity, ever to have ſuſtained.

But I may expect, That Infidels will object againſt the Authority of theſe Evangeliſts, and pretend theſe Matters forg'd, or poſt-dated to their Events: And therefore I ſhall deſire ſuch to conſider ſome others, predicted expreſly, not only when they had not, but when there was not the leaſt humane appearance that ever they ſhould have taken effect. And what can theſe Men alledge in Bar, to that Prophecy of the kind and manner of St. *Peter*'s Death? or that of St. *John*, dying in a manner different from the reſt of the Apoſtles, and ſurviving that coming of our Lord, to deſtroy the *Jewiſh* Nation? or that of the cruel Perſecutions, which his Diſciples ſhould afterwards undergo for his Religion; and that too from the *Romans*, who then quietly permitted the Exerciſe of any kind of Religion? or laſtly, that of the Conſtancy of his Followers, and the amazing increaſe and Succeſs of the Goſpel, notwithſtanding the unſpeakable hardſhips and afflictions, by which Men laboured to diſcourage and ſuppreſs it? Theſe are Facts not to be deny'd, and ſo univerſal a Conqueſt gain'd by a ſuffering perſuaſion, which had ſo little to recommend it to a corrupt World, and ſo many difficulties to vanquiſh, was queſtionleſs, a Point ſo out of the Compaſs of humane Reaſon and Probability, that we cannot aſcribe the Foreſight and fulfilling of it, to any other cauſe, than the Wiſdom and Power of God himſelf.

SECT.

SECT. IV.

The Concluſion.

AND now, from what hath been ſaid in this Chapter, I ought not to doubt, but my Reader is ſatisfy'd in theſe three Points.

I. That from the beginning of the World there was a *Meſſiah* or Saviour promiſed; and that in ſome later Ages, though long before his actual Appearance, the Time, the Manner, the End and the Circumſtances of his Coming, the Quality of his Perſon, Doctrine, Life, Death, Reſurrection, and Aſcent into Heaven, were ſignify'd and predicted by the Prophets ſo plainly, that the fulfilling of theſe Prophecies might be a ſufficient mark to diſtinguiſh the true *Meſſias* by.

II. Secondly, That theſe Particulars ſo declar'd and foretold, were all moſt exactly fulfilled in the Perſon, and Actions, of our *Jeſus*, while upon Earth.

III. Thirdly, That, beſides that Evidence during his Converſation here, he hath likewiſe left us many irrefragable Teſtimonies of his Divine Power, ſince his departure into Heaven. So that every Chriſtian may firmly, and undoubtedly perſwade himſelf of the truth of that Religion, which *Jeſus* taught and eſtabliſhed in the World. There being ſuch abſurdities, and inſuperable difficulties, conſequent upon denying this, that a fair and reaſonable Man would admire, there ſhould be ſuch a thing as an Unbeliever left in the World. As for the purpoſe:

1. Is it even poſſible, That ſo many things ſhould be foretold, ſo particularly, ſo preciſely, in ſo many Ages, and in different places, by different

rent Persons, but all in great veneration for Piety and Virtue; with so nice an Agreement in all; and yet some, to humane Reason, very unlikely Circumstances; and this to be done by any, but the Spirit of that GOD, whose incommunicable Prerogative it is only to see and know distinctly, future Contingences, long before they are brought to pass, or so much as thought of, by those who are the instruments of bringing them about?

2. Can any Man alive persuade himself, that so many things so unaccountable and amazing, should be in every point exactly fulfilled, in any other Person except him only, of whom they were intended?

3. Will the Notions any Man hath of GOD, suffer him to suspect, that GOD would have concurred with *Jesus*, and assisted him in things above the power of Nature, and given him the Testimony of a Teacher sent from himself (as Miracles confessedly are) if he had been a Deceiver, and taken upon him to publish a false Doctrine?

4. Admitting that *Jesus* had intended to seduce Mankind, would he have taken so awkward a Method, as that of imposing Precepts hard and repugnant to the general strain of Flesh and Blood? Would he not rather, like *Mahomet*, have drawn them in by Principles of Sensuality, and suited himself to the Taste and Inclinations of Men? Certainly, as he could not have proposed, so the World could never have embraced so pure and so austere a *System* of Religion, without the assistance of a Supernatural and Divine Power.

5. Could a Man by any Power less than this, a Man meanly born and educated, a Man sent into

to the World, when Learning was in it's moſt flouriſhing ſtate: Could ſuch a one, I ſay, at ſuch a time, have been by any but a Divine Power, ſo exquiſitely knowing, as to excel all the Wiſdom of *Philoſophers*; to give more plain diſtinct Rules for living, than all the Sages that ever lived; to infuſe theſe ſo powerfully into the Minds of poor ſimple Men, that the moſt unlearned *Chriſtian* ſhould be able to ſay more of the Knowledge of God, of the Creation of the World, of the End of Man, of the Meaſures of Moral Good and Evil, of the Immortality of the Soul, of the Judgment to come, of the Rewards and Puniſhments of Virtue and Vice, than all the Sects and Schools, who for ſo many Ages had laboured in theſe Points, and valued themſelves upon attaining to higher Degrees of Learning in them, than common Men?

6. Had not *Jeſus* been ſincere, why ſhould he keep to ſo ſevere, ſo private a way of living? Why ſhould he ſo induſtriouſly decline Advancement and Applauſe? Why did he offer himſelf to ſo opprobrious a Death? Why did he make choice of ſuch poor and deſpicable Perſons for his Apoſtles and Diſciples? And whence is it that Men engag'd in the affairs of the World, follow'd him in ſuch multitudes, that they ſtuck to him with ſuch Zeal, and Conſtancy, and Perſeverance, even to Death? Cheats are never of long continuance, nor do Men raſhly quit all temporal Advantages, for the Service of One, who pretends not to make them any amends of this kind? And what Evidence can we have of any Man's Sincerity, if theſe Conſiderations will not put it paſt a doubt?

7. What account can an Infidel give of the aſtoniſhing progreſs of the *Chriſtian Faith?* ſet on

on foot by plain unskilful People, not cut out for Diſſimulation, or Artifice, or Invention: They went againſt the ſtream of all Mankind: They perſevered in Tortures and Afflictions inexpreſſible: They wrought Miracles above the reach of any humane Power: They overthrew Idolatry, and confounded all the Powers of Hell, by the ſingle Name of their Maſter: They ſaw the Prophecies of *Jeſus* fulfilled, the Puniſhment of their Enemies, the Converſion of whole Provinces, and Kingdoms; and in time the *Roman* Empire it ſelf became ſubject to the Law of a Crucified Saviour. This is ſo marvellous, that we cannot ſure but acknowledge it to be the Lord's Doing.

8. Laſtly, Who can read ſo many expreſs Prophecies of the Old Teſtament, declaring, that the *Jews* ſhould abandon, perſecute, and barbarouſly murder the true *Meſſiah*, at his coming: that for this Crime they ſhould themſelves be abandoned by GOD, finally ruined, diſperſed all over the World, *Without a King, without a Prince, without a Sacrifice, without Altar, or Ephod*? And compare with theſe Denunciations of Vengeance, that which came upon that Nation, ſoon after the Death of *Jeſus*, the Slavery, and Baniſhment, and Reproach they have continued in ever ſince; their forlorn Condition, with regard both to their Temporal and Spiritual Affairs; and, in ſhort, that inexpreſſible variety of Miſeries they are ſunk into, without any proſpect of Recovery: Who, I ſay, can obſerve this, and not be convinced, That that *Jeſus*, whom with wicked Hands they crucified and ſlew, is the very *Meſſias*; and that it is his Blood, which lyes ſo heavy upon Them and Their Poſterity?

Hoſ. 3. 4.

Since

Since then we have such manifold, such abundant Evidence, that Our *Jesus* is the only Saviour of Mankind, and consequently, that His Religion is the true way of serving God acceptably, and to attain everlasting Happiness; I will entreat my Reader to consider farther, That the same *Jesus* foretold as a *Saviour*, was likewise by the same Prophets, foretold as a *Judge*. And that both Testaments are very frequent and pressing, in describing the Majesty, the Severity, the Terrour of that Second Coming: The Niceness of the Account to be rendred of each Action, Word, and Thought: The Everlasting Concern, depending upon the the Sentence of that Great Day; and the mighty Importance, Usefulness, Necessity of bearing this continually in mind, that it may influence our Lives, and prevail with us to make due Preparation to meet Our Lord at his Coming. For this very Person Himself hath forwarn'd us, That his more excellent Law, if not obey'd and diligently perform'd by us, shall add to the number of our Stripes, and serve only to aggravate our Condemnation. If therefore my Reader receiv'd any Light and Satisfaction, in the Truth of the Christian Religion, by the foregoing Pages; I must exhort and conjure him, That, to the confirmation of his Judgment, he would add, the Amendment of his Life; that he will labour to attain the Benefits of the Gospel, by becoming a Christian indeed, and not resting in the mere Name, and empty Profession only. To which purpose I shall, in the next Chapter, shew wherein the Duty of such a one consists; that so every one of us may be able to judge of his own Condition, and provide in time against the Doom reserv'd for those wretched People, who shall

in vain cry, *Lord, Lord*; and be rejected with, *I know you not*; *Depart from me all ye that work iniquity.*

CHAP. V.

Of Faith, *and* Good Works.

HAving formerly prov'd, That the End for which Man was created, and plac'd in this World, is the Serving of God, and thereby gaining eternal Happineſs; I now proceed to ſhew, wherein that Service conſiſts. Which, to be ſhort, is in believing the Doctrines, which *Jeſus* and his Diſciples have taught; and in obeying thoſe Rules and Precepts, which They have left us, for the Government of Our Lives. For in theſe two Points, the Sum of Chriſtianity is contain'd.

And *Firſt*, for our Belief: It is not to be imagin'd, that the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God, ſhould leave us deſtitute of ſufficient Inſtruction and clear Evidence, for all thoſe Articles, which he hath made neceſſary to Salvation. The Priviledge of *Chriſtians* in this reſpect, is foretold by the Prophet *Iſaiah*; *An High-way ſhall be there, and it ſhall be called, The way of Holineſs; the wayfaring-men, though fools, ſhall not err therein:* Meaning, that the Doctrine of the *Meſſias* ſhould be ſo plain and intelligible, that Men of weak Capacities (provided they apply'd themſelves to the Study of it with an honeſt Mind) ſhould be able to diſcern their Duty. And hence St. *Paul* calls Hereticks *Self-condemned*; becauſe the ſwervings of Men from the Truth, proceed rather

Chap. 35.

Tit. 3.

ther from Sin, or Neglect, wilful Errour, or Inconſideration, Paſſion or Prejudice, than from any real Difficulty in thoſe Points, wherein the Subſtance and Foundation of our Religion conſiſts. The Apoſtles of our Lord taught one Doctrine unanimouſly, throughout the ſeveral Churches where they preach'd: The main Articles of this Doctrine were form'd into ſhort Summaries, call'd *Creeds:* Thoſe *Creeds* every Perſon at his *Baptiſm*, was requir'd to declare his Aſſent to: They were collected out of Scripture, and impos'd nothing, which was not either expreſly contain'd there, or might not by manifeſt Conſequence, be prov'd from thence. Thoſe Scriptures were written, diſperſed, and approved as in a full declaration of the Will of God concerning us. The Body of *Chriſtians*, united by, and conſenting in, theſe Doctrines, over the face of the whole Earth, were called the *Catholick-Church*. When any wicked or perverſe Men advanced ſtrange Opinions, Appeal was conſtantly made to theſe Writings, as the Common-Standard of Faith: All falſe Gloſſes and forced Interpretations of theſe were rejected, and forbidden to be received: and Men were eſteemed Orthodox, or otherwiſe, as they agreed or diſagreed with this Rule. So that He, and He only, is to be reputed a true Believer, who ſticks cloſe to the Ancient, the Univerſal Church of *Chriſt*; and, in that, to the clear and natural Senſe of the Word of God, even in thoſe things, which his own Reaſon cannot diſtinctly comprehend. And they, who hold to this Rule, and ſubmit to this Authority of God and his Church, are in a ſafe Condition, as to the firſt Point, which concerns the Faith of a *Chriſtian*.

SECT. II.

Of Good Works.

THE Second branch of our Duty regards the Life and Manners of a Chriſtian; The diſcharge whereof is more difficult than the former, in proportion as the dangers and temptations to it are more various. For the Generality of Errors and Hereſies have ever been obſerved to take their riſe, either from a proud, or a factious Spirit. Pride diſpoſes men to broach new Opinions, to affect Singularity, to wreſt and pervert, or even to queſtion the Authority of Scripture; to contemn the judgment of others, and think our ſelves wiſer than all Mankind; to ſet up our own Notions and Reaſon for the meaſure of what we believe, to reject myſterious truths, and throw off every thing, which does not ſute with our own Intereſts, or Prejudices, or weak Apprehenſions; to prefer the Arguings of our own mind before the Revelations of the wiſe and great God, and to force his Word to deſcend to our Capacities. Faction ſhakes off all Authority of Superiours, as an inſupportable Yoke; kindles Contention, arms People againſt their Lawful Guides, and breaks men into Parties, cuts in ſunder the Bonds of unity and peace, rebels againſt God's Ordinances, and turns the beauty of his Church into deformity and confuſion.

But, though theſe two be the principal cauſes of errours in Faith and Opinion, yet are not the occaſions of vicious practice to be brought within ſo narrow a compaſs. Theſe are as various as we have corrupt paſſions, and inordinate deſires; Each of which may, and often does, betray us to irregularities in our Lives. And hence the

the Scripture levels it ſelf much more againſt Vice, and abounds more with exhortations to a holy Life, than in directions for ſound Belief: Becauſe our frailty in this reſpect is greater, and the temptations we have to encounter, more numerous. Hence our Saviour began his Preaching with the Doctrine of Repentance; and in that divine Sermon on the Mount, treats of Moral Virtues: Humility, and Meekneſs, and Juſtice, and Purity, Patient ſuffering, Forgiveneſs of Injuries, Faſting, Prayer, Contempt of Riches, Contentedneſs and Reſignation, Charity, Integrity, entring in at the ſtrait gate, and an exact Diligence in fulfilling all God's Commands, and Living up to what we have learned. He anſwers his Diſciples with great ſolemnity, that he came not to deſtroy, but to perfect, the Law; that They who break any of his Commandments, and by their Doctrine or Example encourage others in doing ſo, ſhall have no place in his Kingdom; He exhorts his Diſciples to *ſhine as Lights in the World*, by an exemplary converſation; and tells them, *except their righteouſneſs exceed that of the Scribes and Phariſees, they ſhall in no wiſe enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.* He tells them plainly that they cannot *ſerve two Maſters*, and therefore, either *God or Mammon* muſt be abandoned; And concludes, that the only proof of a good Tree is yielding good fruit; which every Tree, that does not, though otherwiſe never ſo beautiful to the Eye, ſhall certainly be hewn down, and caſt into the fire; and that, not every one who ſhall ſay unto him, Lord, Lord, ſhall be ſaved at the laſt day, but even ſuch as had wrought Miracles in his Name, if they heard his ſayings and did them not, ſhall reap no benefit by their Belief, or by any other Priviledges,

viledges, but ſhall be denyed and rejected by him in their utmoſt extremity.

This long Lecture of a virtuous life is a plain Argument, that the owning of Jeſus and his Doctrine will ſtand them in no ſtead, who are not careful to conform their lives to what he taught. For, though Faith be the foundation, yet there goes a great deal more to the finiſhing this Spiritual building. The Principles of Chriſtianity are ſoon learnt, but the practice of it is an Employment for our whole Lives. And, without This, we are but like a foundation without a ſuperſtructure, or a ſtock without branch or fruit, for ſo St. *James* hath told us expreſly, that all the Life of Religion lyes in the practice. *As the body without the Spirit is dead, ſo faith without works is dead alſo.*

Jam. 2. 26.

This is a point in which men, partial to their Luſts, and willing to indulge them with ſome pretence of Reaſons, began very early to miſtake; And therefore they contrived to find ſome colour for their Liberties, from ſeveral paſſages of St. *Paul*, where he ſeems to ſet the obedience of Faith, in oppoſition to a Law of works. Some of the Fathers have been of opinion, that not only St. *James*, but ſome other of the Apoſtles, who wrote after St. *Paul*, had the clearing this difficulty particularly in view. I will here preſent the Reader with a paſſage out of St. *Auguſtine* at large to this purpoſe, becauſe it makes very fully for the matter now in hand. "A wicked Opinion having "ſprung up, even in the Apoſtles days, by "miſunderſtanding St. *Paul*'s argument, St. "*Peter*, St. *John*, St. *James*, and St. *Jude* aimed "in their Epiſtles principally at this end, to vin-"dicate the Doctrine of St. *Paul* from the falſe

August. de fide & oper. c. 14.

"con-

"consequences charged upon it, and to shew,
"that *Faith without good works is nothing worth.* Gal. 5.
"And indeed, St. *Paul* does not speak of Faith
"at large, but only of that lively, fruitful, and
"Evangelical Faith, which (as himself says,)
"worketh by Love. As for that Faith, void of
"works, which these men think sufficient to sal-
"vation, he declares positively against it, that
"though he had such in the highest degree, e-
"ven to work miracles, *and remove mountains* 1 Cor. 13.
"*yet if he had not Charity it would profit him no-*
"*thing.* And what he means by *Charity* is plain,
"when he calls it in other places, *a new Creature,* Ephes. 6.
"and the *fulfilling of the Law.* Hence St. *Peter* in Rom. 13.
"in his second Epistle, after exhorting men *to* 2 Pet. 1. 3.
"*add to their faith vertue,* &c. takes notice, how
"some passages of his Brother *Paul* had been
"*wrested by unlearned and unstable men to their own*
"*destruction.* And he calls it *wresting,* because
"St. *Paul* was in truth of the same opinion, with
"the other Apostles, and held Life eternal im-
"possible to be obtained by any Faith, which
"had not the attestation of a virtuous Life.
"Nay, St. *James* compares this to the Devils
"themselves; *Dost thou believe there is one God?*
"*thou dost well, the devils also believe and tremble.*
"What could be said more truly, more smart-
"ly than this? For thus indeed it was. The De-
"vils confest Christ to be the Son of God, and
"thus far agreed with St. *Peter*; yet Christ com-
"mended the one, and rebuked the other. Let
"not then ignorant Minds be deceived with a
"vain opinion of knowing God, if they confess
"him only with a dead Faith. They read per-
"haps, *This is life Eternal to know thee, the true* Joh. 17. 3.
"*God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent:* but
"then they must remember, how the same E-

"vangeliſt explains that knowledge, when he
1 Joh. 2. 3, 4. "ſays, *By this we know that we know God, if we* "*keep his commandments. He that ſaith I know* "*God, and keepeth not his commandments, the ſame* "*is a Liar, and the Truth is not in him.* With ſuch as theſe it is, that our Lord expoſtulates, *Why call you me Lord, Lord, but do not the things which I ſay?* And again, *If ye know theſe things happy are ye if ye do them.* Of ſuch he complains among the *Jews*, *This People honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.*

I will conclude this Argument with St. *Chryſoſtome*'s reflection, upon the perſon caſt into utter darkneſs for want of the Wedding Garment; whom he looks upon as an Emblem of all wicked Profeſſours of Chriſtianity. Admitted into the Feaſt by virtue of his Faith and Knowledge, as they are baptiſed and viſible Members of Chriſt's Church, but ſhut out becauſe nor adorned with good works, as they ſhall one day be, who caſt a blemiſh upon a Holy Faith, by a ſcandalous and ungodly Life. "He was invit-
"ed to the Feaſt, and brought to the Table,
"(ſays he) but becauſe the foulneſs of his Gar-
"ment diſhonoured the Maſter of the Feaſt, ob-
"ſerve, how lamentably his expectations were
"diſappointed; how grievous a puniſhment he
"was doomed to. He was not only thruſt from
"the Table, and not ſuffered to eat of the Mar-
"riage Supper, but was alſo bound hand and
"foot, and caſt into utter darkneſs, a place of
"weeping and gnaſhing of Teeth. Let us not
"then, I beſeech you, let us not deceive our
"ſelves; by imagining, that Faith will ſave us
"without Works. For except we joyn purity
"of heart and life, with our belief; and, in this
"holy Vocation of ours, deck and adorn our
"ſelves,

"ſelves with the beautiful Garments of virtu-
"ous deeds, which may ſecure us an admittance
"at the Marriage-feaſt in Heaven; nothing ſhall
"be able to deliver us from partaking in the
"miſery and condemnation of this wretched
"man. This is well obſerved by St. *Paul*, who
"after having ſaid, *We have an houſe not made* 2 Cor. 5.
"*with hands for ever in the heavens*, does not for-
"get preſently to add this limitation, *If ſo be that being clothed, we be not found naked.* Thus far he.

It were eaſie to produce many other Authorities to this effect; but Theſe, and the plain words of Scripture, and the Reaſon of every ſober man, are ſufficient to ſhew the neceſſity of a holy Life, in order to our future happineſs. And no man now can be at a loſs to know wherein the true ſervice of a Chriſtian conſiſts. So that each Reader, by the help of this little already ſaid, is abundantly qualified to take a view of himſelf, and to make a right judgment of the Condition of his own Soul: How he may expect to come off in the laſt great day of account; what profit he may hope to reap, or what damage he may fear to ſuſtain, by his knowledge and profeſſion of Chriſt and his Goſpel. To him that walketh uprightly his Conſcience may ſpeak peace; and God, who cannot lye, hath promiſed quietneſs, and aſſurance of Peace for ever: Rewards ineſtimable, and infinite: To him that departs from the right way of true Faith and a good Life, pains and puniſhments no leſs unconceivable are reſerved. So that every Chriſtian, who is in earneſt deſirous to ſecure his own Salvation, muſt be ſure to keep his Eye conſtantly fixed upon Both theſe; To Believe what God hath revealed, and to Live according to the Principles he profeſſes to believe.

Which

Which latter, being, as I hinted before, the more difficult part of the Chriſtian's buſineſs, I ſhall apply my ſelf the more diligently in the following parts of this work, to explain and illuſtrate thoſe Virtues required of us, to remove thoſe Obſtructions and Difficulties, which might otherwiſe prove of ill conſequence to us, and by all poſſible means to awaken and excite men's ſluggiſh hearts to the conſiderations and vigorous proſecution of this moſt important affair; upon which the endleſs Woe or Welfare of every one of my Readers does entirely depend.

CHAP. VI.

Of Eſchewing Evil, and Doing Good.

WHen the Prophet *Iſaiah* inſtructs his people, how they ſhould return, and render themſelves acceptable,
Iſai. 1. to God, he bids them *Ceaſe to do evil, and learn to do well*; and *David* directs the man who would live long and ſee good days, to *Eſchew e-*
Pſal. 34. *vil, and do good.* Which is in truth the Summ of the Chriſtian, as well as the Moral Law; and imports the very ſame thing, which the Apo-
Rom. 6. ſtles under the new Teſtament expreſs, *by dying unto Sin and living unto Righteouſneſs.* And that This is the very end and buſineſs of the Goſpel,
Pet. 1 2. is evident from St. *Paul*, who compriſes the ſubſtance of it all in this one point of a vertuous Converſation. *The grace of God, that bring-eth ſalvation, hath appeared unto all men*; To what purpoſe; Or how it does it bring *ſal-*
Tit. 2. 11, *vation?* Even thus, *Teaching us, that denying*
12. *all ungodlineſs and worldly luſts, we ſhould live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent world.* So that

that the Scriptures, in theſe and ſundry other paſſages, reduce the whole Practical part of a Chriſtian's Duty to Two general heads; The declining, and withſtanding all Temptations to Vice, and The Exerciſe of all Piety and Virtue. With reſpect to the Former, our Life is often termed a Warfare, a Fight, a ſtriving for Maſtery; and Good men are ſtiled Soldiers, men that are continually upon their guard, careful not to be ſurpriſed by their enemies, and in a conſtant diſpoſition to reſiſt and repel them. In regard of the Latter, we are repreſented as Labourers, Husbandmen, Sowers of good Seed, Traders with our Maſter's Talents, Stewards, wiſe Merchants, and the like; becauſe, by the Exerciſe of good works we purchaſe to our ſelves a good inheritance, we return our Lord his own with Intereſt, we approve our ſelves good and faithful Servants, we Till and Dreſs our Lord's Vineyard, we bring in a prodigious increaſe of Treaſure, and are ſure to reap in the general Harveſt of the laſt day, in proportion to that which we have ſown.

2 Tim. 12. 4, 5, 6. Matth. 20. 2 Tim. 2. 6, Gal. 6. Matth. 25. Luke 16. Matth. 13.

Theſe then are the two main Inſtruments of our Salvation, which we are bound perpetually to uſe and attend to; and they muſt ever go hand in hand; For neither of them ſingly is ſufficient for our purpoſe. Innocency of Life, without doing Good, will give us no Title to the recompence of the Juſt; and Good works, without a pure unblemiſhed converſation, will not atone for our Sins and Luſts, nor excuſe us from the doom of the wicked. The *Sacrifices* and *Prayers* of polluted men are declared by God to be *an abomination*; and they, who ſerved him in the ordinances appointed by himſelf, were rejected as hypocrites and unworthy, while their hands

Iſai. 1. & 58.

hands were full of blood, and they ſought their own pleaſures, and did their own works. Again, the Virgins in the Parable reaped no advantage from the purity of that ſtate, while Oyl was wanting in their Lamps, and their good Works did not ſhine before men; and, in the account of the laſt judgment, we find no actual Sin charged upon the Goats on the left hand; the Omiſſion of good Works, was of it ſelf ſufficient to exclude them from Heaven, and ſink them into everlaſting puniſhment. From all which we may learn the noble perfection of a Chriſtian Life, if performed as it ought to be; How bright a Creature is He, who wilfully admits no ſtain in his Mind, or his Life; how uſeful and profitable a Servant, who neglects no opportunity of exerciſing all thoſe Virtues, which fall within the compaſs of his Practice!

Matt. 25.

SECT. I.

Of Avoiding of Sin.

AS to the *Firſt* of theſe, it is evident, God hath placed us in a ſtate of danger and temptation. And theſe we are commanded to ſtrive and watch againſt with all our might; to do it manfully, diligently, conſtantly, ſincerely; becauſe, as oft as we give ground and yield to the Enemy, we revolt from God, and are Traitours and Rebels to the Majeſty of Heaven. Hence we are called upon, if occaſion ſhall require, *to reſiſt even unto blood ſtriving againſt ſin*, to forego our very Lives, rather than our Duty. And, in the Epiſtle to the *Epheſians*, we are particularly warned of the hazard of this combat, and how we ought to be provided for it: *Be ſtrong, my Brethren, in the Lord, and in the power of*

Heb. 12.

Epheſ. 6.

of his might. Put on the whole Armour of God, that ye may be able to ſtand againſt the wiles of the devil. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breaſtplate of righteouſneſs; and your feet ſhod with the preparation of the Goſpel of peace. Above all, taking the ſhield of faith, wherewith ye ſhall be able to quench all the fiery Darts of the wicked: And take the helmet of ſalvation, and the Sword of the ſpirit, which is the word of God. So great need is there of our going out into the field well appointed againſt the Adverſary of Souls; and when we are thus prepared for the conflict, our care muſt be to uſe this Armour well, to diſcharge the duty of our reſpective poſts, and to obey the Orders of our Leader punctually, for otherwiſe we fight to no purpoſe. And therefore St. *Paul* obſerves to his Son *Timothy*, that God expects the ſame regular proceedings with thoſe of the Olympick Games then in uſe, and, alluding to Them, he ſays, *If a man ſtrive alſo for maſtery, yet is he not crowned, except he ſtrive lawfully*; *i. e.* unleſs he both exert himſelf vigorouſly, and obſerve the Rules preſcribed for winning the Prize. To the ſame purpoſe the other Apoſtles exhort us *to reſiſt the devil*, and his wicked inſtruments, *to be ſober and vigilant*, conſidering what ſort of enemy we have to encounter; and by no means to think our ſelves at any time abſolutely ſafe, but to continue ever mindful, that we live in a ſtate of War, and ſuch as muſt not have an end, ſo long as we continue to live here in this Body.

2 Tim. 2. 5.

Jam. 4. 1 Pet. 5. 1 John 2.

You wonder perhaps, how it comes to paſs, that our bleſſed Lord, having done ſo much to conquer this mortal Enemy, and the power of Sin in him, ſhould yet expoſe his followers to ſo many difficulties, and make it neceſſary for Them

Them to fight after his Example. But one evident Reaſon of this is implyed in that paſſage to *Timothy*, that none *can be crowned without ſtriving lawfully*. God did not think fit to caſt away the Joys of Heaven, upon thoſe, who had done nothing for them; and therefore the Reward, which always ſuppoſes a work antecedent to it, is ſuſpended upon this Condition;

Rev. 2.17. *To him that overcometh will I give the hidden Man-*
Rev. 3.21. *na.* And again, *To him that overcometh will I grant to ſit with me on my Throne; even as I alſo overcame, and am ſet down with my Father on his Throne.*

In which laſt words, there is another Reaſon of this proceeding diſcovered, wherein we ought to find very great and ſenſible ſatisfaction; For, how could Almighty God better expreſs his care and kindneſs, than by appointing, that we ſhould be made conformable to the Image of his dear Son? Remember, Chriſtian, that in all thy hardſhips thou followeſt the Captain of thy Salvation, and art travelling to glory, through the ſame rugged paths, which He did not diſdain to tread before thee. Thy hope and deſire is to be crowned with Him, and it would ill become thee to grudge the ſame terms of obtaining Thy crown, which he ſubmitted to for His Combat and Conqueſt exalted Him to the right hand of God, and Theſe will bring Thee into the Joy and preſence of thy Lord. 'Tis upon this, as the laſt moſt powerful, and moſt comfortable conſideration, that the Apoſtle fixes, to ſuſtain the *Hebrews* under the heavy burden of Perſecution and Affliction;

Hebr. 12. 1, 2, 3. *Let us lay aſide every weight, and the ſin which doth ſo eaſily beſet us, and let us run with patience the race that is ſet before us. Looking unto Jeſus, the Author*

thor and finiſher of our faith, who, for the joy that was ſet before him, endured the croſs, deſpiſing the ſhame, and is ſet down at the right hand of the Throne of God. And again, *Conſider him --- leſt ye be wearied and faint in your minds.*

Such was the Encouragement given by St. *Paul*, ſuch the Exhortation grounded upon it: So reaſonable, that we ſhould contend earneſtly, and bend our utmoſt force, againſt all temptations to ſin; Becauſe, by ſo doing only, can we ſhew our ſelves Soldiers fit to be liſted under the Banner of this gallant Leader, and dutiful Children of His, and our common Father, who hath prepared ſo glorious an Inheritance for his ſuffering Sons. So manifeſtly do our hardſhips themſelves contribute to our advantage; ſo eminently do they promote the Glory, and evidence the power of Chriſt; in that he was not only able to vanquiſh the Devil in his own divine perſon, but ſtrengthens us by the aſſiſtance of his heavenly grace, and overcomes him daily in his faithful ſervants and followers. Who, though, of themſelves, miſerably poor and weak, yet find their natural impotence marvellouſly ſuccoured and ſupported; and, in the power of their Lord's Might triumph and gain to themſelves glorious Crowns. And This, no doubt, is one excellent Reaſon, why, notwithſtanding the guilt of Original Sin be taken off by Chriſt's death, and waſhed away in Baptiſm, yet the corrupt motions and ſeeds of that evil Concupiſcence are ſuffered ſtill to remain in our hearts. Not for our prejudice, but for our Exerciſe and Tryal: To miniſter occaſions for combat, and matter for Victory here, and Glory hereafter. And O! The Wiſdom and Goodneſs of our gracious God! How truly tender is

This

This Father of his Children, who ſo contrives their Duty, that even That, which gives them the greateſt trouble, is not only a neceſſary proof of their obedience, but converted into an Inſtrument of their greateſt advantage!

Upon this view, it is, that St. *James* animates the Chriſtians to whom he writes, bidding them *account it all Joy when they fall into divers Temptations*; and, reaſon good they have to do ſo, ſince St. *Paul* aſſures us, that *God will not ſuffer* his Servants *to be tempted above that they are able.* Our bleſſed Lord, in theſe conflicts, takes great delight in obſerving our courage and Conduct, he ſtands by, and looks on, and pours in ſeaſonable recruits; and This, not only as St. *Stephen* diſcerned him, in the outward ſufferings for the teſtimony of the Truth; but in every ſort of tryal, when we are engaged with the luſts of the Fleſh, with the allurements of the World, with the wicked ſuggeſtions and ſubtle inſinuations of the common enemy of Souls. He ſuſtains us during the action, he comforts us when it is over, and rewards our conſtancy with Joys unſpeakable. How happy then are we to ſerve ſo good a Maſter, ſo ſollicitous for our ſucceſs, ſo careful to promote it, ſo ready to help in time of need? With what undaunted reſolution ſhould we take the field under a Commander, who ſuffers none to fall, or be harmed, but Cowards and Renegades, ſuch as run away and dare not ſtand to their Arms, or ſuch as place an undue confidence in their own ſtrength, and do not rely upon His aid and protection!

Jam. 1. 2.

1 Cor. 10. 13.

Having thus accounted briefly for the Wiſdom and Goodneſs of God, in making this life a ſtate of war and hazard, notwithſtanding the conqueſt

conqueſt himſelf hath gained over our Mortal Enemy; I muſt now apply my ſelf to conſider, after what manner we ought to behave our ſelves in this Engagement. What diligence and circumſpection, what vigour and conſtancy, what ſeverity and reſolution is requiſite on our part. For, though this ſting of ſenſuality be left behind for our advantage, yet it is a moſt troubleſome and dangerous, a peſtilent and deadly Poiſon, lurking in our Bowels, and, if it be not nicely watched, and cruſhed betimes, ſuch as will certainly prove our diſeaſe and death. St. *Paul* hath deſcribed to us the condition of ſuch men, where it is ſuffered to gather head, *I ſee another Law in my members, warring againſt the Law of my mind, and bringing me into the Law of Sin, which is in my members. O! wretched man that I am; who ſhall deliver me from the body of this death? Thanks be to God through Jeſus Chriſt our Lord.* Even Thoſe, who are baptized, and are confirmed in goodneſs, are often aſſaulted by this domeſtick Enemy. They feel a ſecret and ſtrong Propenſion to Evil, even when they are fully convinced, that they ought not to commit it. And, for this corrupt Byaſs of Nature thus depraved, nothing is a match, but the Grace of God; nothing an Antidote againſt this Venom, but the Blood of Jeſus; none able to deliver us from this Tyrant, but he who hath by his death bound the ſtrong man, and ſpoiled his houſe. To this Grace our own diligence and co-operation muſt not be wanting, for he will not ſave us without our own concurrence. And therefore the Apoſtle tells us, how he managed himſelf in this encounter; *So fight I, not as one that beateth the Air*; not idly, or at random, like Fencers when they flouriſh their

Rom. 7. 23, 24, 25.

1 Cor. 9.

Swords for pomp and in diverſion: But he fell on ſmartly, and ſhewed himſelf in very good earneſt. *I keep under my body*, ſays he, *and bring it into ſubjection, leſt after I have preached to others, I my ſelf ſhould be a Caſt-away.*

Obſerve this, ye negligent and effeminate Chriſtians; that either decline this combat wholly, or behave your ſelves careleſly and delicately in it. See this choſen veſſel of God, after being taken up into the third heaven, and admitted to partake of myſteries ineffable, ſee him continually with ſword in hand, beating down the rebellious appetite by painful ſeverities, and mortification of the fleſhly and ſenſual part; making this, not only a ſubject, but a ſlave, to his nobler and rational; uſing it with rigour, keeping it at due diſtance, having it at his beck, not ſuffering it to ſtep or look aſide, not to lift up ſo much as a finger without his allowance; and then conſider, what will become at laſt of all your nicety, and fond indulgence: or what ſucceſs you muſt look for, who cheriſh Treachery at home, and encourage a malepert Servant, ready to fly in your face upon the leaſt connivence, and ſure to take part with your Enemy againſt you!

Nor may we think this rigour ſomething peculiar to the perfection of an Apoſtle, for the ſame ſtrict diſcipline is enjoyned as abſolutely neceſſary to every common Chriſtian. *Mortify therefore your members which are upon the Earth*; and how they muſt be mortified he tells us, by commanding us to guard all the approaches to *Fornication, Uncleanneſs, Evil Concupiſcence, Covetouſneſs*, &c. He makes this the diſtinguiſhing Character of a Chriſtian. *They that are Chriſt's have crucified the fleſh, with the affections*

Col. 3.

Gal. 5. 24.

and

and lusts: These are the only means to preserve our Life with God, either here according to the Principle of Regeneration, or hereafter in the happiness of being likened to our Lord in the glories of his Resurrection. *If ye live after the flesh, ye shall dye; but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the Body, ye shall live.* Herein then it is incumbent upon us to exercise our selves; and This is the nature of our Combat, that we chastise and subdue the body, bringing sense and flesh into subjection to the Spirit, to mortify and refuse our corrupt inclinations; and let Reason and Religion have their just influences, and reign in our minds without controul. He that acts by this Rule is in the way of Life; he that pampers and makes provision for his Lusts, that indulges Ease and appetite, is in the broad way to destruction. For in this sense too, is that of our Saviour true, *He that loveth his life, shall lose it*: If he that labours to make life grateful and pleasant, and to sweeten it by present and sensual delights, shall do it to his great and eternal disadvantage. But, *he that hateth his life for Christ's sake shall save it.* He that uses himself hardly, restrains his desires, abominates excesses, subdues and mortifies this sensual principle, for a short life of sobriety and strictness here, shall be an infinite gainer in the end, and find himself abundantly recompenced by a Life of happiness unspeakable and eternal. Rom. 8. 13.

Hence hath this War against Sin and Concupiscence been always prosecuted with such vehement application by the best of Christians in all Ages. They esteemed it a small thing to abstain from such raging wickedness, as is a Scandal to the sober sense of Mankind, or even

from the act of other Sins forbidden in the Gospel; but thus carried their point a great deal farther, and would not allow so much as the inward and secret consent of the Heart. For thus our Lord hath taught us, that from the instant of the Will agreeing to the Temptation, the Sin is committed before God; though fear, or shame, or want of opportunity, or any other accidental hindrance, prevent its breaking out into actual commission. For it is very observable, that St. *James* hath distinguished three Steps or Degrees, by which Sin advances to Perfection: And these are *Suggestion*, *Delight*, and *Consent*. The First is the Enemy's work; the Second proceeds from the temper of our sensual and depraved Appetite; the Last is the result of our own Reason and Choice. The First may be without any fault of ours; The Second ordinarily proceeds from some neglect of putting a better bent upon our Affections, and drawing them off from the love and relish of sensitive Objects; the Last always renders us guilty before God. The Seed of Sin is sown by the First, it is cherished and brought forward by the Second, but it arrives to Perfection in the Last. Since then the inward consent of the Mind is That, in which the very Essence of Sin consists; (For even an action sinful in it self, is not a Sin in Him, who commits the outward act, without such inward consent.) A good Christian is obliged to be vigilant in every one of these degrees. In the First, by industriously avoiding all the occasions of Sin, declining those Persons Conversation, whose Example, or his Discourse, would suggest evil Inclinations, and in short every thing, whereby the Man hath formerly found, or hath reason to suspect himself apt to fall. In the

Second,

Second, by ſuppreſſing thoſe Suggeſtions early, when they come; not ſuffering the Soul to feed upon, or delight her ſelf in them, but cruſhing the Cockatrice in the Egg, and ſtifling the Motions to Sin, as ſoon as ever we diſcover them. But if we ſhould be too remiſs in this point too, and not only feel, but reliſh evil motions; yet at leaſt we muſt be ſure to manage our Third Point; to fight reſolutely in defence of our laſt Entrenchment; and not yield up the conſent of the Heart, which is our only Security; for if That be loſt, the Foe is within us, and we are undone for ever.

Now, in order to the diſcharging our Duty in the Two laſt of theſe inſtances eſpecially, for in them lies our greateſt danger, there is a Two-fold Caution neceſſary. The Firſt is, to be exceeding watchful over our own Actions, and Words, nay even our very Thoughts To *fear all our own works*, with holy *Job*; and with *David*, *to commune with our own heart, and make diligent ſearch into our Spirit*. Which Exerciſe of examination we find practiſed with great exactneſs by the Saints of the New Teſtament alſo. For St. *Paul* had performed it ſo nicely, as to affirm, that he was not to his knowledge guilty of any Offence againſt God; yet would he not, even upon this acquittal of his Conſcience, preſume to declare himſelf juſtified in the Eye of an All-ſeeing God. And not only theſe celebrated Saints, but all prudent and good Men, who have had a tender regard to the ſucceſs of this Spiritual Engagement, have retained this moſt profitable cuſtom of ſtrictly and frequently examining their own Conſciences, and taking the moſt preciſe account of their Thoughts, Words, and Actions, that the frailty of Humane Nature Pſal. 77. 5.

could qualify them for. The Second Caution is very reſolutely and diligently to mortify our Paſſions, to correct the byaſs of our depraved Inclinations, to draw our Affections to proper and worthy Objects, and diſengage them from ſuch as Senſuality and Concupiſcence are apt to entangle them in. Thus we weaken the force of our Enemy, and cut off the Powers he deſigns to attack us with. For nothing is of more approved Excellence in this reſpect, than the keeping our Bodies in ſtrict Temperance, ſubduing them with Abſtinence, and corporal Affliction. And in our Age, which is ſo little addicted to this ſelf-denying part of Religion, it would appear almoſt incredible, ſhould I undertake to ſhew, what Care and Zeal the Saints heretofore uſed in applying this remedy. St. *Paul* ſays of himſelf, and his Brethren the other Apoſtles, 2 Cor. 6. that they ſerved God continually in *Watchings*, in *Faſtings*, in *Hunger and Thirſt*, in *Cold and Nakedneſs*. The like Auſterities we are told of by many of the Primitive Preachers, and firſt Profeſſors of Chriſtianity. Among whom afterwards many retired from the World, and ſequeſter'd themſelves altogether from Buſineſs and Pleaſure; that ſo they might be out of the way and reach of Temptations; They fled to Deſarts, and Dens, and Caves; and there exerciſed ſuch Abſtemiouſneſs and Rigour, as are a great reproach to the Senſuality and Luxury of looſer and later Ages. They paſſed whole Days and Nights in Prayer to God, and, having abandoned all thoughts of the World, employ'd their Minds entirely in Pious Meditations, in refining and exalting their Affections, and in putting themſelves into ſuch a frame of Soul, as might beſt prepare them for the Purity of

thoſe

thoſe bleſſed Regions above, which they thought no Severities, no Pains too great to obtain.

Thus did theſe bleſſed and renowned Saints heretofore demean themſelves; And All this they eſteemed their Duty, for the more effectual ſubduing Sin, and maintaining a good Conſcience unſpotted from the World, and unimpaired by the Aſſaults of their Ghoſtly Enemy! But alas! my Friends, how do we manage this important Affair? What pains are we content to be at? what Solicitude do we expreſs? what guard do we keep upon our Actions or Words, much leſs upon our Thoughts? Who is there, that fleeth the occaſions of Sin? Who indeed rather does not ſeek and provoke them, and turn his own Tempter? Who labours in mortifying the Fleſh and its Appetites; nay, Who does not cheriſh, and indulge, and inflame them? Are we not led away Captive by the Enemy of Souls at his Will, and yield to every Temptation; ſwallow every Bait in our way, even though we know there is Poiſon and Death upon the Hook? Merciful God! what a degenerate State of Chriſtianity are we fallen into! And what can be the End of ſuch wretched negligence? No other certainly, than that of the careleſs and voluptuous Sinner, deſcribed by *Solomon*; *I diſcerned a Man void of underſtanding, and behold there met him an Harlot, ſubtle of heart: With much fair Speech ſhe cauſed him to yield, with the flattering of her Lips ſhe forced him: He goeth after her as an Ox to the Slaughter, as a Bird haſteth to the Snare, and knoweth not that it is for his Life.* Prov. 7.

What is here ſaid of One, is true of every kind of Temptation. The Complyance wounds our Souls to Death, and brings them into Bon-

dage to a mortal and mercileſs Enemy. We diſarm and enfeeble our ſelves by negligence, and vicious habits, and have nothing but a miracle of Grace left for our deliverance. *Whoſoever committeth Sin is the Servant of Sin,* (ſays our bleſſed Saviour) and (the Wiſe Man) *The wicked ſhall be holden with the Cords of Iniquity.* Theſe, like a Strong Chain, entangle and compaſs him in; a Chain, that we cannot ſee to the End of, and whoſe firſt Link is faſtned in Hell it ſelf. And by what degrees it draws us down thither, ſome Holy Fathers have obſerved in this manner: Suggeſtion draws on Thought, Thought engages our Affection, Affection produces Delight, Delight perſwades our Conſent, Conſent advances into Acts, Acts beget Habits, Habits harden and tempt us to Deſpair of Mercy, Deſpair defends the Sins it commits; after which follow Glorying in Wickedneſs, Defiance of God, and Contempt of, and Scoffing at Religion, which is as it were the beginning of, and entrance upon Damnation it ſelf. To theſe unretrievable Miſeries are wretched Men reduced, for want of timely care in reſiſting Temptations, and in reſtraining the motions of their ſenſual Appetites. For (as the Son of *Sirach* well obſerves) *If thou giveſt thy Soul the deſires that pleaſe her, ſhe will make thee a laughing Stock to thy Enemies.* And, Is it poſſible, that Men ſhould be ſo ſtupid in their own apparent and incurable Dangers? The World is now grown to that deſperate paſs, of *drinking up Iniquity as Beaſts do Water*, without ſcruple or remorſe; ſo far from doubt or examination, that Heaven and Hell are eſteemed no better than Dreams and Fables, the imaginations of a ſick Fancy; Sobriety is Preciſeneſs; Religion Singularity; Mor-

John 8.

Prov. 5.

Eccluſ. 18. 31.

Job 15.

Mortification Madneſs: Men *make their Belly their God*, and *glory in their Shame*; but whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, the Apoſtle hath pronounced their doom; for the *End of ſuch* moſt certainly is *Deſtruction*. Phil. 3.

He therefore, who does not only aſſume, but expects benefit by, the Name of a Chriſtian, will beware of this dangerous Snare, and apply himſelf to withſtand and correct the inclinations of depraved Nature, early and in good earneſt. He will cruſh the Head of the Serpent, as ſoon as ever he begins to wind himſelf into his Soul; and take ſuch methods, as the *Second* Part of this Treatiſe ſhall direct. In the mean while, that which hath been already ſaid, leaves him (I ought not to doubt) abundantly convinced, of the mighty importance and neceſſity of this Care; and the complicated, the diſmal, the unſpeakable Miſchiefs, into which Men are betrayed for want of diligence and watchfulneſs in the waging of this Spiritual War.

Sect. II.

Of Doing Good.

I Now proceed to the Second Branch of a Chriſtian's buſineſs; which conſiſts in the Improvement of Virtue, and the Exerciſe of Good Works. And in this regard it is, that we find Such in Scripture reſembled to Labourers, to Husbandmen, to Stewards, to Merchants, and the like. With reſpect to Men conſidered under theſe Capacities, they are adviſed to *Sow to themſelves in Righteouſneſs, that they may reap in mercy*; they are told, that *to him that ſoweth, Righteouſneſs ſhall be a ſure Reward.* Hoſ. 10. 12 Prov. 11. 18.

They

Eccleſ. 9. 10. They are admoniſhed, *Whatſoever their hand findeth to do, to do it with their might*; They are put in mind by St. *Paul*, that Jeſus Chriſt came Tit. 2. 14. into the World for this very purpoſe, *to purify unto himſelf a peculiar People, zealous of Good* Eph. 2. 10. *Works*; and that Chriſtians are *God's Workmanſhip, created in Chriſt Jeſus unto Good Works*: Their Condition is repreſented by our Lord himſelf, under the Figure of Servants, entruſted with Talents by their Maſter, who is gone into a far Countrey to receive to himſelf a Kingdom, and hath left orders, that they ſhould *traffick till* Luke 19. *he come*; and that, at that coming, he will not fail to require an account, to reward their Diligence and Fidelity, and to puniſh their Sloth and Unfaithfulneſs. Theſe, and many other, paſſages make it moſt evident, that the Life and Calling of a Chriſtian in this World is deſigned for a State of Labour and Diligence, and great Coloſ. 1. 12 improvement; Or, as St. *Paul* expreſſes it, to *be fruitful in every good work, and increaſe in the knowledge of God*: That, the time allowed us here below is the Seaſon of Sowing and Planting; the day of Merchandiſe, to make a wiſe Bargain for the Kingdom of Heaven: For ſo ſhall the painful, the induſtrious, the provident have Praiſe of God, and an advantagious return for all his Toil and Expence, ſuch as will certainly be the making of him for ever: But the ſlothful and negligent ſhall be overwhelmed with Confuſion, and Miſery, with everlaſting Poverty and Contempt. Thus are thoſe obſervations of the Wiſe-man moſt true, in a myſtical and ſpiritual Senſe alſo: *The hand of the diligent maketh rich. He that Tilleth his Land ſhall increaſe his Heap*; and with reſpect to the time of Old Age, the time of Death, and the diſtant

Con-

Concerns of an Eternity, in which we ſhall have nothing to ſubſiſt upon, but what we lay up now, and carry with us from hence, may that Reproof be addreſſed to every careleſs Chriſtian; *Go to the Ant, thou Sluggard, conſider her ways, and be wiſe; Which having no guide, overſeer, or ruler, provideth her Meat in the Summer, and gathereth her Food in the Harveſt.* Prov. 6. 6, 7, 8. And This indeed is the moſt excellent, the moſt profitable Wiſdom, to gather a Bank for the time to come; and prepare for our Journey into that Countrey, where there are no freſh Proviſions to be had. This is that Wiſdom, to which the Son of *Siracb* with ſuch variety of moving Arguments invites us. *Come unto her, as one that Ploweth and Soweth, and wait for her good Fruits; thou ſhalt not toil much in labouring about her, but thou ſhalt eat of her Fruits right ſoon. She is very unpleaſant to the ignorant; he that is without underſtanding will not remain with her. But come thou to her with thy whole Heart, and keep her ways with all thy Power: For at the laſt thou ſhalt find her Reſt; and that ſhall be turned to thy Joy.* Eccluſ. 6. 19. &c.

For the obtaining which Joy it is, that St. *Paul* at every turn importunes Men with ſuch holy vehemence, that they would *abound in good works*; that they would do them at all times, to all Men; that they would do them with cheerfulneſs, and not grow weary of ſo excellent a Practice; Aſſuring us, that our *Labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord*; that *God will not forget their love who miniſter to the Saints*; and that he would be in ſome ſort *unrighteous*, if he ſhould. This is the End aimed at by our Bleſſed Saviour, in his Parable of the *Unjuſt Steward*, whoſe prudence and forecaſt we are exhorted to imitate, in *making to our ſelves friends of the Mammon* Gal. 6. 2 Cor. 8. 9. 1 Cor. 15. 58 Heb. 6. 10.

of

of Unrighteouſneſs, that when we fail, they may receive us into everlaſting Habitations. And in a word, This Grace of Liberality, and Charity, and All others, which may adorn the Goſpel of Chriſt, and the Converſation of his Followers, we are frequently called upon to ſet about in good earneſt, while we have time, and our *day* laſteth, conſidering, as our Lord hath given us warning, that *the Night draweth on, wherein no Man can work.* And here again we may find but too juſt matter for Shame and Confuſion, if we would ſtate the compariſon between our own and the earlier Ages of the Goſpel: The diligence and indefatigable pains They beſtowed upon cultivating their Souls; And the ſenſleſs ill Husbandry and Lazineſs we are guilty of. The Zeal, with which They caſt their Seed into the Ground in vaſt quantities; the publick Bleſſings they brought to their generation while living; and the noble and uſeful Monuments of their Charity, by which They ſpeak to all Poſterity when dead: The Pious Foundations and Endowments, ſet apart for the promotion of Learning, the Improvement of uſeful Arts, the more undiſturbed exerciſe of Religion, the Relief of the Poor, the Lame, the Blind, the Aged; The Sums expended in Service of the Publick, and ſuch Conveniences, as are not the leaſt uſeful, though leaſt regarded, inſtances of Charity. Theſe and many more good Works were then the Gifts of Chriſtians; Not only out of their ſuperfluity and abundance, but by ſtraitning themſelves in the Conveniences, nay the very Neceſſaries, of Life; and retrenching the Fortunes of their Families; that ſo they might contribute to the Benefit of Souls, to the Honour of God, to the Advantage of Mankind, and en-

Joh. 9.4.

ſure

ſure to their Children; the Bleſſing and Bounty of a better Father in Heaven. But alas! We are ſo far from giving Neceſſaries, as very rarely to moderate our Vanities, or take off from our Sins for the ſake of doing Good. Grandeur, and Equipage, and Port, are now lookt upon as more indiſpenſable than Charity; and thoſe Creatures, which contribute merely to our Pomp, or our Diverſion, more tenderly, more ſumptuouſly maintained, than the naked and hungry Members of Chriſt: So void of Piety and Charity, ſo ſtupid and brutiſh are We; So worthleſs, ſo unprofitable, ſo ſcandalous, if put into the Balance with thoſe who were formerly Chriſtians indeed, and manifeſtly proved their Faith by their Works.

From the two heads of Duty treated of in this Chapter, I beg my Reader to obſerve two things.

Firſt; What a Lovely, and Excellent Creature a truly good Chriſtian is; whoſe conſtant care it is to keep himſelf and every action unblemiſhed with Sin; and whoſe perpetual work it is to ſerve God, and to profit Men, by all poſſible ways, that his Prudenteſt conſideration can ſuggeſt, and his utmoſt power extend to. Were theſe things performed by us in Perfection, according to the Pattern our Bleſſed Maſter ſet us, what a Heaven upon Earth would this make? No Malice or Contention, no Violence or Deceit, no Wickedneſs or Impurity of Manners; no Law neceſſary to contain Men in their Duty, but only Religion, the Law of Chriſt our King. For this alone would purify our Hearts and Intentions, would unite our Affections, would inflame our Devotions, and equal us to Angels, in Concord, in Zeal, in Innocence.

But

But alas! by abandoning theſe two great Lines of our Duty, the very Heathen and Infidels are more civilized, leſs diſſolute, leſs profane than We. Which, beſides the diſhonour it reflects upon our Lord and his Religion, muſt needs aggravate our condemnation exceedingly; and make our caſe hereafter the ſame with thoſe places which our Saviour upbraids for having wrought his Miracles, and preached his Divine Doctrines there without effect. *Wo unto thee Chorazin, Wo unto thee Bethſaida; for if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon, which have been done in You; they would have repented long ago, in Sackcloth and Aſhes. Wherefore I ſay unto you, it ſhall be more tolerable in the day of Judgment for Tyre and Sidon, than for You.*

Mat. 11. 21,22.

Secondly. We may likewiſe take notice from hence, how very different Lives, the Virtuous and the Wicked lead in This, and conſequently, how very different Portions they receive in that other World, where God ſhall render to every Man according to his Works. The ſober and vigilant Chriſtian doth not only abſtain (ſo much as humane Frailty may) from all Sin, eſpecially from ſuch as is wilful and mortal, which All, by God's aſſiſtance, may avoid; but by continual ſtriving and inflexible reſiſtance, he ſtrengthens his Title to a Crown in Heaven. But the Careleſs and Unwary conſents to every Luſt, complies with every Temptation, and heaps Sin upon Sin, without meaſure, number, or end. The diligent Chriſtian does not only preſerve *a Conſcience void of offence toward God and toward Man*, but does (at leaſt in diſpoſition and deſire) perform infinite good Works; and where his Abilities fail, that diſpoſition and deſire are accepted and accounted

to

to him. But the diſſolute and wicked is neither good in Deed, nor ſo much as in Will. He hath a long Black Catalogue of Evils to anſwer for; and he employs his Wit, his Affections, his Body, his Strength, and all his Faculties and Powers, in the Service of Iniquity, and to the advancing the Kingdom of his own, and Chriſt's declared Enemy. So that, as the Other obtains increaſe of Grace here, and of Glory hereafter, this Wretch *Treaſures up to himſelf wrath againſt the day of Wrath*, and takes pains to enſure Vengeance and Damnation. And, ſince each of theſe live and dye ſo contrary to one another, can we wonder, that their Condition ſhould be equally oppoſite in the next World, where Men's Fate depends entirely upon what they had done in this?

Let us then learn to be wiſe, while we have Time before us. If we find, upon enquiry, that we have gone in a wrong way hitherto, let us thank God, for the mighty benefit of being brought to a Senſe of our Errour, before it be too late to amend it. Many, no doubt, are now howling in Hell Fire, who never thought of this matter at all; but who, if they had been awakened, as we are, or ought to be, now by theſe very Conſiderations, might perhaps have eſcaped thoſe dreadful Torments, to which they are for ever given up without any poſſibility of redreſs. Take care then, my Chriſtian Friends, to convert this Mercy to your Advantage, and not to your deeper and more inſupportable Condemnation. Caſt not away willfully your precious Souls; thoſe Jewels, which the Son of God thought worth Redeeming at ſo dear a Price, which He ſo paſſionately deſires to Save; and to ennoble with the Riches

of

of his Grace and everlaſting Glory. O give them up entirely to his Diſpoſal, lodge them in ſafe Hands, and be content, for ſuch a Recompence, to live according to his Directions. Remember, you muſt dye; and therefore do that very thing this moment, which, when you come to dye, you would give the whole World that you had done. And, becauſe the conſideration of our later End is a moſt powerful Motive to do well; and Death and Judgment are the very Things, which muſt determine our Affairs for all Eternity; I cannot purſue this Argument of a Good Life better, than by offering in the next place ſome quickning, and ſeaſonable Reflections upon theſe two moſt important *Points*.

CHAP. VII.

Of the Laſt Great Day of Account.

THE greateſt Wiſdom of Servants in this Life is, duly to remember what ſort of Maſter they have to deal with, what Account he will require of the Truſt repoſed in them, and what Puniſhments he hath power to inflict, in caſe of Unfaithfulneſs or Neglect. And ſince every Chriſtian ſtands in the ſame Relation to Almighty God; nothing can be more adviſable, than to conſider very ſeriouſly, what reckoning he is like to be called to, and how his Lord will proceed in it; whether he is to Audit his Accounts with an eaſy, or a mild, or a weak; or elſe with an auſtere, and a ſtrict, Maſter; One that will be moſt exact in his Enquiries, and is mighty to revenge any Failure of Duty,

and

and Breach of Truſt. And of this matter we cannot remain long in doubt, if we will but attend to theſe Two Things.

Firſt: The Method God took, to publiſh and promulge his Law to This World; with what marks of a wonderful and dreadful Majeſty; with what Thunder, and Trumpets, and Earthquakes, and other Circumſtances of Terrour that Rule of Life, contained in the Ten Commandments was iſſued out to the People of *Iſrael.* All which St. *Paul* urges, as an Argument how exceedingly afraid to break this Law Men ought to be. For it is a known Caſe, that ſuch dreadful Pomp is never uſed to no purpoſe; and that the Publication of any Law is not near ſo terrible, as the execution of it upon Offenders. Exod. 19. 20. Hebr. 12.

Secondly: Another Conſideration, which may give us right Notions of this Matter, is that of the Judge, or Lord Himſelf, to whom we are accountable. Now *we muſt all appear before the Judgment-ſeat of Chriſt,* ſays the Apoſtle, *that every one may receive the things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.* This Truth our Lord himſelf hath inſtructed us in, by ſundry Parables, particularly that of the Talents. He hath told us the Manner and End of his Appearance; *The Son of Man ſhall come in the Glory of his Father, with his holy Angels, and then ſhall he reward every Man according to his works:* He hath warned us how far that Account ſhall extend; that for *every idle word Men ſhall ſpeak, they ſhall anſwer for it at the Day of Judgment.* We are likewiſe inſtructed elſewhere, that this Account ſhall be exquiſitely nice and ſevere; that the leaſt Errours and Offences ſhall not be forgotten or over-look'd: 2 Cor. 5. 10. Matt. 25. Matt. 16. 27. Matt. 12. 36.

Eccleſ. 12. 14. *For God ſhall bring every work into Judgment, with every ſecret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil.*

Now of this Judgment we may obſerve two kinds, intimated in Scripture. The one *Particular*, which paſſes upon every Soul, immediately upon her departure out of the Body: *For it is appointed for all men once to die, and after that the Judgment.* The other *General*, which ſhall be executed upon the whole World, ſummoned together, at the laſt great Day. And of this we are to underſtand Chriſt's Coming in Glory. Now, though in the former of theſe, the Soul receives it's irrevocable Sentence, (as may be gathered from the Parable of the Rich-man and *Lazarus*, aſſigned to their reſpective ſtates and apartments of Reſt and Torment, as ſoon as they died) yet are there many excellent Reaſons, why God, beſides this Private and Perſonal, hath ordained, and reſerved Men to another Tryal; which ſhall be Univerſal, Publick, and Manifeſt, performed in view of the whole World. As particularly Theſe that follow.

Hebr. 9. 27. Matth. 25. 31, &c.

Luke 16.

1. *Firſt*, That the Bodies of Men which ſhall be awakened, and brought back from the Grave, may partake with their Souls, in that Eternal Bliſs or Woe, deſigned for the Reward or Puniſhment of thoſe Virtues or Vices, in which the Body did likewiſe bear a part, while converſing with, and united to, the Soul in this preſent Life. 2. *Secondly*, That Chriſt, who in the days of his Fleſh upon Earth, was diſhonoured and deſpiſed, may once in the end of the World appear in full Luſtre of Majeſty and Power, to the utter confuſion of his Enemies; who after that Day, ſhall never behold him more. 3. *Thirdly*, That the Wicked and the Righteous may receive

ceive their Recompence openly, to the greater diſcomfort of the Former; the more triumphant Joy of the Latter; and the clearer manifeſtation of the Righteous Proceedings of this Judge. To which ſome have added 4. a *Fourth* Reaſon, *viz.* That the Good and Ill Effects of what Men have done here, by their Examples, their Inſtructions, their Books, and the like, may alſo come into the Account: Which cannot ſo conveniently be reckoned, or rewarded while this World continues; becauſe the Effects, of which they laid the Foundations in their Life-time, may be perpetually increaſing, ſo long as there are Succeſſions of Men, capable of being profited, or prejudiced by them. Thus ſome have been of Opinion, that St. *Paul* (for Inſtance) receives a daily Addition to his Glory and Happineſs, in proportion to the Benefit received by his Writings and holy Life, in every Age of Chriſtianity; that the old Hereticks are more and more tormented, as more Souls are corrupted by their peſtilent Errours; that diſſolute *Poets*, and other propagators of Vice, have their Reckoning inflamed by all the Debauchery, which the Compoſures they leave behind them, occaſion in the World: That the Negligence of Parents, and Maſters, of Magiſtrates, and Miniſters, ſhall add to their Condemnation, as the Miſcarriages of Perſons under their Care ſhall have grown by their Connivence, or the ill Principles countenanced and inſtilled by them. But now after this General Judgment, the ſtate of Diſcipline is at an end: No Man then is capable of becoming better or worſe, in his Moral Capacity: And therefore This is a proper time for a Final Sentence, becauſe it can have a full view, and take in all the Good and

Evil, done or occaſioned, from the firſt Beginning, to the abſolute conſummation of the World.

Of this Laſt General Judgment then, which ratifies the Particular one paſſed before, and makes up the whole Account, with all Mankind, the Scripture often admoniſhes us moſt carefully to meditate; to look upon it, as our moſt important Affair; and to apply it to our Conſciences, as the moſt powerful reſtraint from Sin, which mortal and frail Men can poſſibly have recourſe to. And therefore, *knowing this Terrour of the Lord*, I ſhall, with the Apoſtle, endeavour to *Perſuade Men*, by laying before them ſome of thoſe things delivered in Scripture concerning it. And that with regard (1) To the preparatory Diſpenſations antecedent to it; (2) The Proceedings of that Day it ſelf: and (3) The Conſequences of that Judgment, or the different ſtates of Men afterwards, according to the Sentence then pronounced upon them.

2 Cor. 5. 11.

Sect I.

Of the Diſpenſations Preparatory to the Geneneral Judgment.

TO beget in Men a more awful Senſe of this terrible Day, and to expreſs the Majeſty and the horrours of it; Almighty God hath thought fit to ordain certain Tokens of it's Approach, and to reveal to us what they ſhall be, that we may the better provide to meet our God, and not be ſurpriſed with that Coming; upon a due Preparation for which our All depends. Some of theſe our Bleſſed Lord hath deſcribed thus to his Diſciples, *When ye ſhall hear*

Luke 21. 9, &c.

of

of wars and commotions, be not terrified; for theſe things muſt firſt come to paſs, but the end is not by and by. Nation ſhall riſe againſt Nation, and Kingdom againſt Kingdom: And great Earthquakes ſhall be in divers places, and famines, and peſtilences, and fearful ſights, and great ſigns ſhall there be from Heaven. Thus are the grievous and manifold afflictions, which uſher in the Day of Judgment; ſo many Warnings and Repreſentations of the Miſeries to commence at that Day: And our Lord (ſays St. *Gregory*) declares, That the end ſhould not immediately follow the Wars and Commotions; becauſe it is fit, that great variety of temporal Calamities ſhould go before, to awaken in Men the Impreſſion and Dread of thoſe eternal Miſeries, which ſhall come after. But, beſides the Miſeries among Men, there are other Evidences of this Day, to be attended to; for all Nature ſhall conſpire in giving warning of it; and every Creature, every Element, proclaim it's dreadful motion toward us. *There ſhall be ſigns* (ſays our Lord again) *in the Sun, and in the Moon, and in the Stars. For the Sun ſhall be darkned, and the Moon ſhall not give her light; and the Stars ſhall fall from Heaven, and the Powers of the Heavens ſhall be ſhaken. The Heavens ſhall paſs away, and the Elements ſhall melt with fervent heat: The Earth alſo, and all the works that are therein, ſhall be burnt up. And upon the Earth ſhall be diſtreſs of Nations, with perplexity: the Sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after thoſe things, which are coming on the World.* To which account by our Lord himſelf, if we add the Prophecies of *Ezekiel*, *Daniel*, and *Joel*; and St. *John* in his Revelation, nothing can be expreſs'd in terms more moving, more amazing.

Matth. 24. Mark 13. Luke 21. 2 Pet. 3. Ezek. 38. Dan. 7. Joel 2. Revel. 6. 9. & 11.

For who can reflect on thoſe incomprehenſible Terrours, without Fear and Trembling? What manner of Day do we think will that be, when the Heavens ſhall put on mourning; when this whole Earth ſhall totter, and quake as a Leaf before the Wind; when the Sun and Moon ſhall loſe their Light; the Stars drop from their Orbs; the Sea forſake it's Channels, the Earth be drown'd in a Deluge of Blood, and the whole World at once on a flaming fire? Can we wonder, that even Angels and Juſt Men, are ſaid to be afraid at that Day? And then, according to St. *Peter*'s way of Reaſoning, *If the Righteous ſcarcely be ſaved, where ſhall the Ungodly and the Sinner appear?* What ſhall become of the careleſs and diſſolute Chriſtian, when he ſhall ſee ſuch an Ocean of Miſeries ruſhing in upon him? O that Men would think upon this Torrent of Woes, while they may be diverted and eſcaped! O that they would awake now, and prepare to ſtand firm at that hour, when the laſt Trumpet ſhall awake them, whether they will or not! That we would all follow St. *Jerome*'s Example, and *neither eat, nor drink, nor ſleep, nor take any matter whatſoever* in hand, without the awful remembrance of this Day, and thinking how we ſhall then be able to anſwer, for what we are now doing! For to this purpoſe are all the Warnings of this Day given us, and the ſolemn Preparations to it, as lively as words can paint them: And fit indeed they are to uſher in that, which makes the ſecond Branch of my preſent Argument.

1 Pet. 4. 17.

SECT.

SECT. II.

The Proceedings of that Day *it ſelf.*

WHEN the neceſſary Preliminaries are over, and all things in readineſs for the Judge's coming in, *Then ſhall all the Tribes of the Earth ſee the Son of Man coming in the Clouds, with Power and great Glory. And he ſhall ſend his Angels at midnight with a great cry, and they ſhall gather together his Elect, in the twinkling of an Eye, from the one end of Heaven to the other.* Thus ſhall he mount his Throne in Majeſty, terrible, as his former Appearance was deſpicable and humble; and the meek Lamb once ſlain for the Sins of the World, ſhall put on the vengeance of an angry Lion. For who *may abide the day of his coming, when the very Mountains ſhall melt before him? When the Lord ſhall be mighty and ſtrong, as a tempeſt of Hail, and a deſtroying Storm, as a flood of mighty Waters overflowing, which caſteth down all in it's way?* Matth. 24. 25. Mark 13. 25. Matt. 12. Luke 21. 1 Cor. 15. Mal. 3. Iſai. 64. Iſai. 28.

The Judge then being ſeated, and all the Nations of the Earth convened before him, the Scriptures proceed to deſcribe the order of this Proceſs. *I beheld* (ſays *Daniel*) *and the Ancient of days did ſit; thouſand thouſands miniſtred unto him, and ten thouſand times ten thouſand ſtood before him; the Judgment was ſet, and the Books were opened. And all thoſe that were dead,* ſays St. *John, were judged out of the things written in thoſe Books; every one according to his works.* So that theſe Books, by which our Cauſe muſt be try'd, ſhall be the Evidences produc'd of Men's Actions in this Life, the teſtimony of their own Conſciences, and the infallible Records of God's exact Dan. 7. 9, 10. Rev. 20.

Obſervation and Remembrance. Then ſhall every Creature bear witneſs againſt the Reprobate: The Heaven and Earth contrived for their Benefit and Comfort; the Conveniences and Enjoyments of this World, which were abuſed by their inordinate fondneſs; the Companions that ſinned with them; the good Men afflicted and oppreſt by them; the Saints and Miniſters of God, whom they have ſet at nought; but above all, the Myſtery of their Redemption, whoſe Glories then ſhall be diſplay'd, and vindicated by theſe Wretches Ruin. Theſe and infinite Bleſſings ſhall riſe up againſt them, to reproach and condemn that Ingratitude, which offended ſo gracious a God; who by ſo many inſtances of Love and Goodneſs, endeavoured in vain to win them to his Service.

Wiſd. 5. 1, 2. *Then ſhall the Righteous ſtand in great boldneſs before the face of ſuch as have afflicted him, and made no account of his Labours.* Luke 23. *But the Wicked ſhall be troubled with terrible fear; they ſhall cry to the Hills fall on us, and to the Mountains cover us from the face of Him that ſitteth on the Throne, and of the Lamb; for the great Day of his wrath is* Rev. 6. *come. This is that Day of the Lord, cruel with indignation, and fierce anger; to lay the Earth deſolate, and to deſtroy the Sinners out of it.* Thy day, O Lord, for ſo by way of Eminence thou wilt have it called; whereas the time of Tryal in this preſent Life, thou condeſcendeſt to call *Our* Day. In This Day thou art content to hold thy peace, and patiently to ſuffer Sinners in their own wicked courſes; but in That Day thou wilt vindicate thy Honour, and by the Execution of Juſtice, make thy ſelf known to the terrour of thine Enemies. For thou ſhalt then

then be manifeſt to all; Good and Bad ſhall be preſent at this Work, and none exempted from his portion in it. Therefore, remember, Reader, that what thou now, perhaps too negligently runneſt over, thou ſhalt hereafter ſee in ſuch perfection, as no words can deſcribe no humane Imagination can conceive.

Good God! What a Day ſhall that be, when all the Sons of *Adam* ſhall meet; when the Earth and Sea give up their Bodies, and Heaven and Hell ſend back the Souls they poſſeſs, to be again united to thoſe Bodies? How will theſe two old Acquaintance meet? How joyfully the Good, how dolefully the Wicked? The Godly to receive the Bodies they once lived in, to a participation of their Bliſs; and therefore Theſe ſhall exult and ſing. But how ſhall the Damned bear to ſee thoſe Bodies, which have been the occaſions and inſtruments of their Sin and Miſery? Eſpecially knowing that this ſecond Union is only the Beginning of greater and eternal Sorrows? Is it not reaſonable to ſuppoſe they will curſe, and abhor, and bitterly inveigh againſt every Member and Part, whoſe Luſts and Exceſſes were formely gratified, at the ſad expence of eternal Torment and Ruine? Such will be the lamentable condition of ſinful Souls at that Day. But alas! Lamentation will avail them nothing; for the Law muſt have it's courſe. For *then ſhall the King divide the Goats from the Sheep.* O dreadful Separation! What would the greateſt Princes and Conquerours of this Earth give for the loweſt room among the *Sheep on the right hand?* They who had once the World at will, and all Dignity and Honour in their diſpoſal, would now eſteem the Lot of the meaneſt, and once moſt deſpiſed of God's Elect, Matt. 25. 31.

an

an Advancement more to be coveted, than Crowns and Laurels, the Pomp and Wealth of ten thouſand Worlds. Were they to live again, this would be their Choice: For truſt me, Reader, we ſhall think and judge at that Day, after a manner quite different from what we do now. But alas! 'tis too late for Sinners to correct their Opinions then. They muſt ſtand to what is paſt; the Proceſs is begun, the Judge preſent, whoſe Power they cannot avoid; whoſe Wiſdom they cannot deceive; whoſe Equity they cannot bend; whoſe Anger they cannot appeaſe; whoſe Determination they cannot change; and from whoſe Sentence there lyes no Appeal.

O my Friends! how ineſtimable a Treaſure will a good Conſcience be at that Day! a Conſcience that will bear us out, when Princes and all the Great Ones ſtand naked and trembling, and have nothing to urge in Bar to the Puniſhment of thoſe Sins, in which now they glory. Wealth and Power cannot relieve them, the Judge is neither to be aw'd nor brib'd; Submiſſion comes too late, and will not be taken; Interceſſion of Friends will be ineffectual; their only Mediator is their Judge. What will theſe Wretches do in this Extremity? whither will they flee then from the Terrours, which now they ſo very hardly bear to be told of? When they are beſet round with Vengeance and Fear, without the leaſt glimpſe of Hope or Comfort left? Above, their angry God thundring upon them; Beneath, Hell opening it's Mouth to ſwallow them up: On the one hand their Sins accuſing; on the other, the Devils ready to execute the Sentence of Torment upon them. Within, the Worm of Conſcience gnawing their very Heart-ſtrings: Without, damned Souls howl-

howling; and on every ſide, the whole World burning. O Bleſſed Jeſus! what a caſe is this! How will the Sinner ſuſtain this Anguiſh, or what courſe can he take? To go back, is impoſſible; to move forward, is intolerable; to ſtand as he is, will not be allow'd. Death he ſhall wiſh for, but that flees from him; To the Mountains he ſhall cry, but they connot cover him: No, no; ſtand there he muſt, in the preſence of his provok'd God, of his abuſed Saviour; a deſperate, forlorn, miſerable Wretch; till He, whoſe Bowels were once ſo tender as to deſcend from Heaven, and die for him, ſhall now without any kind of Relentings utter that dreadful and irreverſible Sentence, *Go ye Curſed, into everlaſting fire.*

Sect. III.

The Conſequence of the General Judgment.

THis ſhall be the laſt Act of that diſmal Tragedy: A particular Account whereof our Lord himſelf hath given in the xxvth of St. *Matthew*'s Goſpel, from the 31*ſt* Verſe to the end of that Chapter: The words themſelves are more generally known, than to need repeating; but I would put my Reader in Mind upon this occaſion, That, among the Cauſes, for which the Wicked are there condemned to everlaſting Puniſhment, our Saviour does not alledge, either Unbelief, or any enormous actual Sins, but only the Omiſſion of ſome good Deeds, and neglecting to extend their Charitable Relief, when they had proper Objects, and fit Opportunities, and ſufficient Ability for it. And, becauſe they came not up to this point of Chriſtian Perfection,

fection, therefore they are delivered up to eternal Torments. But who can form to himſelf any juſt Idea of the different Reſentments, wherewith that Sentence will be entertained? The Saved rejoycing in Hymns of Praiſe to the Glory of their Saviour: The Damned bewailing, blaſpheming, and curſing the hour they were born: The Angels extolling the Equity of that Sentence, which even They who ſuffer under it, can find no exception againſt.

Think of the intolerable ſcoffs and reproaches of thoſe Infernal Spirits, who with a malicious inſolence, ſhall upbraid and deride thoſe very Torments, to which they have betray'd theſe Wretches. Who firſt make Souls their Prey, and then inſult over their puniſhment for being ſo. Think of the eternal ſeparation which ſhall then be made between the deareſt Relations and moſt intimate Friends: Husbands and Wives, Fathers and Children, Kindred and Acquaintance; ſome to Happineſs, others to Miſery, without any hope of ſeeing or hearing of one another any more: Nay, without ſo much as pitying the calamitous condition of thoſe we loved moſt tenderly in this World: Becauſe thoſe partial Fondneſſes are all ſwallowed up in the Joy for God's Glory; which ſhall then be our only moving Conſideration, and miniſter Delight, when this is magnified by the Execution of Juſtice, even upon thoſe, whom in this World, Relation, or Friendſhip, or any other Temporal Engagement, makes deareſt to us. O my Soul! which art now taking a diſtant proſpect of theſe things, but ſhalt then ſee them diſtinctly, and be preſent at them, what a parting will this be? What Heart would not break? but alas! it cannot then break, and put and end

to

to it's Miſery. Think, O ye Children of this World, what will then be the end of all your vain and ſenſual Delights, your glittering Pomp, and empty Reſpects, your Riot and Laſciviouſneſs; your Flatterers, and pleaſant Companions? Theſe all forſake you, when you need them moſt; and have left no part behind, but a bitter Remembrance for ever to torment you. Alas! how poor a thing will Riches and Honour, and worldly Grandeur ſeem at that hour, and how joyful will that Man be, who hath led an honeſt, painful, virtuous Life, and travelled to Heaven, though through the rougheſt ways of Poverty, and Affliction, and Contempt? Well is it for that now ſeemingly wretched Man, that ever he was born; well for him, that ever he was afflicted, and deſpis'd; ſo well, that none but God can expreſs or conceive his Happineſs.

Let us then reflect how eaſy a matter it would be, to avoid the dangers of this Diſmal Day; would we but ſet about it ſpeedily, and in good earneſt. And This indeed is the very End, for which God hath revealed the thing to us, that we may take warning in time, provide Oyl in our Lamps, and be ready to meet the Bridegroom at his coming. For thus our Lord concludes his ſevere threatnings with friendly exhortations. *Take heed to your ſelves; Watch and pray, for ye know not when the time is. And what I ſay unto you, I ſay unto all, Watch.* And in another place, *Take heed to your ſelves, that your Hearts be not overcharged with Surfeiting and Drunkenneſs, and Cares of this Life, and ſo that day come upon you unawares. Watch ye therefore and pray always; that ye may be accounted worthy to eſcape all theſe things that ſhall come to paſs; and to ſtand before the* Mark 13. 36, 37. Luke 21. 34, 36.

Son

Son of Man. To the ſame purpoſe St. *Peter*, *The*
2 Pet. 3. 9, 10, 11. *day of the Lord ſhall come as a Thief in the Night, in the which the Heavens ſhall paſs away, and the Elements ſhall melt with fervent Heat; the Earth alſo, and all the Works that are therein ſhall be burnt up. Seeing then that all theſe Things ſhall be diſſolved, what manner of Perſons ought we to be, in all manner of Holy Converſation and Godlineſs; Looking for, and haſting to the coming of the Day of God*, &c.

Now by this *Looking for, and haſting unto the Coming of the Day of God*, is meant living as becomes Men, who believe and expect ſuch a Day, examining into our preſent State, ſpeedy Amendment of Life, and attending to Works of Piety, and Charity; which is the Oyl in our Lamps, and that ſovereign Remedy of Souls, to which we may conveniently enough apply the
Eccleſ. 18. 19, 20. Wiſe-man's Advice; *Uſe Phyſick or ever thou be Sick. Before Judgment examin thy ſelf, and in the*
1 Cor. 11. 30. *Day of Viſitation thou ſhalt find Mercy.* Thus St. *Paul* tells us, that *if we would Judge our ſelves, we ſhould not be Judged of the Lord.* But becauſe ſo very few enter upon theſe Enquiries, and are careful to make a right Judgment of themſelves; what Poſture their Souls are in; what Evil they do, and what Good they neglect to do; hence it comes to paſs, that ſo few eſcape the Dangers of that terrible Day: For few make any Preparation for it, few care to hear or think of this ungrateful Subject: The Advice of Chriſt and his Miniſters is turn'd into a Jeſt by the Profane; and they, who arrive not at at this hardened Pitch of Wickedneſs, make but light of it: Watchfulneſs in our Spiritual Concerns is a Virtue, that but very rarely finds Proſelytes. *Eat and Drink, for to morrow we Die*, is the common

Voice

Voice of Mankind in the very worſt Senſe of the Words. Men will not be made ſenſible of their Caſes for fear it ſhould give them Diſturbance; and this affected Ignorance, this Spiritual Sleep renders their Deſtruction paſt all Remedy. God of his infinite Mercy awaken our Stupid Souls, that we ſleep not in Death Eternal; and grant us Grace, *to know in this our Day, the Things that belong unto our Peace*, before that Day of his come, when they ſhall *be hidden from our Eyes*; or diſcerned, when it is too late to profit by the Sight of them.

CHAP. VIII.

Of the Nature and Guilt of Sin.

After this Explanation of that rigid Account, to be taken of every Man at the laſt Day, I think my ſelf bound to obviate any miſtaken Apprehenſions which may ariſe from hence, concerning the Severity of thoſe Proceedings, as if it exceeded the Nature and Quality of the Offence. This Chapter therefore is intended to ſhew what is the Reaſon, that God does upon all Occaſions expreſs ſuch irreconcilable Averſion to Sin and Sinners, and perſecute them with Indignation and Wrath implacable. For thus the Scriptures declare, That God *hates Iniquity*, that *he abhors them that work Wickedneſs*: Pſal. 5. that the *whole Life* of ſuch Men, their Thoughts, Prov. 15. their Words, nay their very *Prayers* and *Sacrifices* are an Abomination to him; while they Iſa. 1. perſiſt in their ungodly Courſes. He forbids Pſal 50. ſuch as *hate to be reformed, to take his Covenant in* Eccl. 15.

their

their Mouth, or to praiſe his Name: And, if ſuch be God's Reſentment againſt Sin here, we cannot think it ſtrange, that he ſhould deal ſo Rigorouſly with it hereafter; For *God* is not mutable as we are; the Sinner may change his Ways, but God cannot change his Mind: The Things he Loves or Hates he does ſo unto the End. And yet the Scriptures make it no leſs plain, that he loves Men's Souls moſt tenderly, that he deſires not the Death of any Sinner, but would have them live and be ſaved; that is, by Repentance and Amendment, while the Seaſon of Reconciliation laſts. But then this admitting Men to Pardon and Salvation, upon no other Terms than a Change of Mind and Manners, ſhews plainly that his Averſion to the Sin it ſelf is fixt and unalterable; the Reaſonableneſs whereof may ſoon appear, to any who conſider, what an undutifulneſs ſuch Men are guilty of, by tranſgreſſing his Commands wilfully, and ſetting light by that Authority that binds them upon our Conſciences. What Monſtrous and baſe ingratitude this is in Men, who daily receive innumerable, ineſtimabe Benefits from that Giver of all good Gifts! Each of which Provocations are ſufficient to incurr the utmoſt ſeverity againſt them, who will neither ſtand in awe of infinite Majeſty, nor be won to better Courſes by infinite Mercy.

Ezek. 18.
1 Tim. 2.

But there is one Reaſon above all the reſt, which goes to the very bottom of this Matter; and that is, the horrible Injury we do Almighty God, and the ſlight we put upon him in every Sin, wilfully committed by us. Which indeed is ſo great, that no petty Prince upon Earth would endure it at the Hands of any Subject; and much leſs can we think that the Lord of

of Glory, and the King of Kings will ſuffer an Outrage ſo often repeated as this, to paſs unpuniſhed in his Vaſſals and Creatures. Now for a right underſtanding of this Caſe, we ſhall do well to obſerve, that in every deliberate Sin, though we do not attend to, nor are perhaps ſenſible of it, there paſſes in the Mind of the Tranſgreſſor, a certain Practical Diſcourſe of the Man's Will and Judgment (as there does in every Inſtance of a free Choice) which proceeds in this Method. We lay before us, on One ſide the convenience of the Sin we are tempted to commit, the Pleaſure or the Profit which invites us to it; And, on the other ſide, we ſet againſt this, God's Diſpleaſure, the loſs of his Grace and Favour if we comply with ſuch Temptation. Thus poyſing, as it were, the Matter under debate, with God in one Scale, and the Advantage we propoſe by offending in the other, we ſtand doubtful for a while, which of theſe ought to be preferred; but when we comply, and Sin, we caſt the Scale on that ſide, chooſe the Pleaſure, and reject Almighty God; declare in effect, that we are content to ſtand to all Hazards, and rather will loſe the Favour and Grace of our Maker and Redeemer, than forego the Satisfaction of committing that Sin. Now what can be more Reproachful, what more intolerable, than to ſet a vile Pleaſure above the infinite Majeſty and Goodneſs of God? Is not this leſs excuſable, than the Diſhonour offered Jeſus by the Jews, when they choſe *Barabbas*, a *Robber* and Murderer, and *crucified the Lord of Life and Glory?* No doubt, however we may think of the Matter, the Sinner hath leſs to alledge for his own Perverſeneſs, than the very worſt of thoſe Jews. They knew not the va-

lue and Dignity of the Perſon refuſed by them, for had they known him, St. *Peter* bears them Witneſs they would not have done it; but the Sinner knows this, and yet does it: They rejected Jeſus once, but he does it often, daily and hourly, even as oft as any Temptation offers, and he yields up his Conſent to it. And, if this Conſideration be duly weighed, it is no wonder that God ſhould revenge this Diſhonour ſeverely, that he ſhould give Men up to the Damnation they have choſen; and not be reconciled to thoſe, who, all their Life long, have treated him after ſo unworthy and contemptuous a manner.

But beſides, there is likewiſe, in every hardened and habitual Offender, an inveterate Malice againſt God: He does not only Affront and Deſpiſe, but he hates this Majeſty on high. If it lay in his Power he would pluck him out of his Throne, and, as it is, he wiſhes in his Heart, that there were no ſuch Power in being to Obſerve and Puniſh him.

This at firſt View perhaps may ſeem a heavy Charge, but it is the very Truth of the Caſe, and does not really over-ſtrain the Point at all. For, let any reſolute Sinner ſearch his Conſcience to the bottom, and then tell me, whether the Thoughts of a Judge and an Avenger be not ſo uneaſie to him, that, if he could diſpoſe Matters according to his own Will, there ſhould be no Immortality of the Soul, no Reckoning or Recompence after this Life, no Hell, no God at all; but theſe ſhould all be ſacrificed to his own Wicked Luſts, and the ſecure Enjoyment of his guilty Pleaſures. Now, becauſe God is a Searcher of the Heart and Reins, and ſees clearly all that lurking Treachery and Malice,

lice, which others very often, and the Man himſelf ſometimes does not diſcern; therefore he looks upon Sinners as his declared Enemies; and profeſſes open War with thoſe, who, by the Principles of their own Actions, act in Hoſtility againſt him. And What, can we think, muſt become of thoſe Worms of the Earth, when they have thus enraged ſo powerful an Adverſary; when they have wearied out his Forbearance, and extinguiſhed all the relentings of Pity toward them? For thus God deſcribes himſelf, ruſhing upon Sinners with a Thirſt of Revenge, and taking Delight in their Deſtruction; *Thus ſaith the Lord, the Lord of Hoſts, the mighty one of Iſrael, Aha! I will eaſe me of mine Adverſaries, and avenge me of mine Enemies.* Thus St. *Paul* calls the Impenitent, *Veſſels of Wrath, fitted for Deſtruction.* And *David* complains, *that the Unwiſe will not conſider this, neither will the Fool underſtand it; that when the Ungodly are green as the Graſs, and all the Workers of Wickedneſs do flouriſh, it is that they ſhall be deſtroyed for ever.* The ſhort Proſperity they boaſt in here ſhews that they are reſerved to endleſs Miſeries hereafter; it muſt be ſo, for *Lo thine Enemies O Lord! lo thine Enemies ſhall periſh, and all the workers of Iniquity ſhall be confounded.* And thus we ſee both the irreconcileable Enmity between God and Sinners, and the Ground of that Enmity.

Iſa. 1. 24. Rom. 9. Pſal. 92. 7, 9.

But, for the farther Juſtification of this Severity, let us conſider farther, the meaſure of this Hatred againſt Sin; what Bounds there are to limit it, or rather indeed, whether it be not infinite, and ſubject to no Limitation at all. For in truth, the largeſt Underſtanding cannot comprehend the greatneſs of God's Diſpleaſure in

this Caſe againſt every mortal and wilful Sin. The Reaſon whereof is Twofold.

Firſt, The incomprehenſible Holineſs and Purity of God; for, in Proportion as he is better than We, his Averſion to all Wickedneſs muſt riſe above Ours. Conſequently, a Being infinitely Good, muſt love Goodneſs, and hate Evil to an infinite degree: Conſequently, the Rewards of Goodneſs, and the Puniſhment of Evil muſt be infinite and everlaſting: becauſe he can never ceaſe to love the one, and to hate the other.

Secondly, The greatneſs of any Offence is aggravated, in proportion to the Party againſt whom it is committed. The ſame Affront, or Blow, to a Peaſant, or a Slave, and to a Prince, differ as much as the Quality and Character of theſe Perſons differ; and the Puniſhment deſerved by it riſes, as the Crime riſes. Now, ſince every deliberate Sin is a wilful Diſhonour and Offence to God, whoſe Majeſty is infinite, the Guilt of every ſuch Sin is infinite, and incurrs infinite Hatred and Puniſhment at God's Hands. This ſeems to juſtify thoſe, otherwiſe ſeemingly unaccountable Diſpenſations, of the irreverſible Damnation of the fallen Angels, for one ſingle Act of Rebellion; of the rigorous Puniſhment of our firſt Parents diſobedience, by which not only the Offenders themſelves were Chaſtiſed, but the Ground curſed for their ſakes; the Guilt of their Crime tranſmitted to all their Poſterity the wretched Effects of it, as temporal Afflictions, and Sorrow, and Death, entailed upon all Mankind (of whom they were the common Source and Repreſentatives) to the end of the World; Of the Satisfaction required by the Divine Juſtice for Sin, which would not be

be appeaſed upon eaſier Terms, than thoſe of God's own, and only begotten Son taking our Fleſh upon him, and in it ſuffering a moſt painful and ignominious Death; and ſo becoming our common Repreſentative in the Expiation, as our firſt Parents had been in the Tranſgreſſion. For, though the leaſt of his Sufferings were of infinite Value, by Virtue of His Divine, united to Our humane Nature; yet God ceaſed not to lay Affliction upon Affliction, he ſpared him not when bathed in Blood and Water, he heard him in the Agony and Anguiſh of his Soul inexpreſſible, beſeeching, that *If it were poſſible the Cup might paſs from him*; he heard his doleful Exclamation upon the Croſs, *My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?* And yet notwithſtanding thoſe ſtrong Cries and Tears, he would not deliver him; but added one Stripe to another, one Pain and Torment to another, till he had breathed his Soul out, and dyed under the Intolerable Burden. And all this to teſtify his hatred againſt Sin; and to be a warning, that He, who ſpared not his innocent and beloved Son, when ſtanding in the place of Sinners, will not ſpare thoſe Sinners themſelves, if they remain obdurate, and will not ſubmit to be reclaimed.

Mar. 26. Luk. 22. Mar. 27. Iſa. 53.

Upon the ſame account it is, that we read ſo many diſmal Threatnings, and aſtoniſhing Relations of God's dealing with Sinners; *Upon the ungodly God ſhall rain Snares, Fire and Brimſtone, Storm and Tempeſt; This ſhall be their Portion to drink. Great Plagues belong to the Ungodly. Death and Bloodſhed, Strife and Sword, Calamities, Famine, Tribulation and the Scourge; Theſe Things are created for the Wicked, Sinners ſhall be turned into Hell, and all the People that forget God. Unto*

Pſal. 11. 32. Eccl. 11. 9, 10. Pſal. 10. Rom. 2. 8, 9.

to them that do not obey the Truth, but obey Unrighteouſneſs; Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguiſh, upon every Soul of Man that doth Evil. Theſe, and infinite other denunciations of Vengeance may give us a Notion of the Sinners deplorable Circumſtances, and the unſpeakable Hatred of God againſt him, while he perſiſts in his ungodly Courſes. From all which Conſiderations we cannot but infer with the Wiſe Man, that *he that ſinneth is an Enemy to his own Soul*; and that ſince ſuch are of the Devil, their Portion will not fail to be in Miſery, with thoſe Devils and Damned Spirits, which they take ſuch perverſe Delight to reſemble, in their Works and Diſpoſitions, during this preſent Life.

And is not all this ſufficient to beget in us a due Deteſtation of Sin, and make us afraid even to commit it? Will not theſe Threatnings ſhake the ſtouteſt Heart? What deſperate obſtinacy is this, to go on in the Way of Deſtruction, without Remorſe, or Scruple, or Conſideration where ſuch Practices will end? And yet we find too many, ſuch as *David* deſcribes, who, *like the deaf Adder ſtop their Ears, and refuſe to hear the Voice of the Charmer, charm he never ſo wiſely*; Men, upon whom no Methods uſed for their Amendment make any Impreſſion at all. The inward Motions of God's Spirit they ſtifle and ſuppreſs, the Remorſe of their own Conſciences they ſilence, the Threatnings of Puniſhment they deſpiſe, the Admonitions and Examples of Good Men they regard not, and the Exemplary Vengeance upon others they take no warning by: And yet the Miſery they draw upon their own Heads by this way of living is ſo great, that, were Matters rightly conſidered

Pſal. 58.

ſidered, a Man would not commit one wilful Sin, to gain Ten Thouſand Worlds. For what can be a tolerable compenſation for the forfeiture of that Grace, by which alone we are enabled to do or think any Thing that is Good? What can repair the Loſs of God's Love, and Protection, and fatherly Care, by this Means turned in to profeſt Enmity? What amends can be made us for that Inheritance of a Glorious and Eternal Kingdom in Heaven, to which by deliberately offending our Father there, we cut off all Title and Claim? What ſenſual Pleaſure is to be compared to that inward Peace, and ſweet Conſolation, with which a good Conſcience cheers the Spirits of the Juſt? What madneſs is it to enſlave our ſelves to our Mortal Enemy, to make that Soul, which was once the Temple of the Holy Ghoſt, a Den of Dragons, a Dungeon of Devils, a Sink of Filth and Noiſome Abominations, and for ever a Companion of the Damned in exquiſite Torments? *Laſtly*, Who in his Senſes would abandon the Saviour that dyed for him, renounce all Intereſt in thoſe Sufferings, which alone can make him Happy, trample under Foot the precious Blood of the Son of God, and, as much as in him lies Crucifie afreſh, and perſecute his Redeemer? And yet This is the Guilt, this the Miſery, of all backſliding Chriſtians, of whom St. *Peter* truly ſays, *That it had been better for ſuch not to have known the Way of Righteouſneſs, than after they have known it, to turn from the Holy Commandment delivered unto them.* 2 Pet. 2. 21.

Let wanton Worldlings then ſolace themſelves never ſo much in their Vanities, and ſoften their Wicked Actions by trifling Excuſes: Let them call their Pride, Good Breeding;

their Intemperance, Good Fellowſhip; their Anger and Revenge, Honour and Courage; their Laſciviouſneſs, obeying Nature; yet ſhall they one day to their Sorrow find, how thin a Shelter all theſe Pretences are: They ſhall be made ſenſible to their Coſt, that God is not to be Jeſted with; and all their Drolleries upon Him and Religion, which now make them wicked Diverſion, ſhall then be recanted too late, and ſeverely accounted for. They will then wiſh in vain, that thoſe Warnings of the Apoſtle, had found an early Paſſage to their Hearts; *He that deſpiſed* Moſes's *Law dyed without Mercy; of how much ſorer Puniſhment, ſuppoſe ye, ſhall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and counted the Blood of the Covenant, wherewith he was Sanctified an unholy Thing, and hath done Deſpite unto the Spirit of Grace?* And again, *If God ſpared not the Angels that ſinned, but caſt them down to Hell, and delivered them into Chains of Darkneſs, to be reſerved unto Judgment; And ſpared not the old World, but brought in a Flood upon the World of the Ungodly; And turned the Cities of* Sodom *and* Gomorrha *into Aſhes, condemning them with an Overthrow, making them an Enſample to thoſe that after ſhould live Ungodly; The Lord knoweth how to reſerve the Unjuſt unto the day of Judgment to be Puniſhed.* And this indeed is the proper Way of Reaſoning: For, Why ſhould not every Man draw theſe Conſequences to himſelf? If the Angels, Creatures of ſo much more Excellence and Power than Man, if *Adam* in Paradiſe, if all the other Inſtances we read of, paid ſo dear for ſome ſingle Sin, what am I to expect, who have been guilty of ſo many? If God hath born longer with Me, than with ſome others,

Heb. 10. 28, 29.

2 Pet. 2. 4, 5, 6, 9.

what

what a ſad Account have I to make, if his long ſuffering do not lead me to Repentance? If *David* and other Holy Perſons afflicted themſelves ſo ſore, for Forgiveneſs of their Sins, what Puniſhment will remain for me, if my Sins ſo grievous, ſo numerous, be not forgiven? If our Lord hath told us true, that the way to Heaven is ſtrait, and the Gate that leads to Life narrow; and that Men ſhall give Account for every idle Word, What ſhall become of Me if I take my Eaſe, and purſue the Pleaſures of Senſe, and am ſo far from obſerving my Words, that I ſeldom enquire into my Actions? If the Righteous be ſaved with Difficulty, where ſhall I appear, or how ſhall I be able to ſtand in that dreadful Day, who am ſo miſerably Worldly and Wicked?

Theſe ſorts of Expoſtulation would prove of mighty Benefit, if we would Argue our ſelves by them into a juſt Dread of God's ſevere Judgments, and not flatter or deceive our own Souls. For want of theſe it is chiefly, that the blackeſt and moſt enormous Vices are indulged. Men have not God before their Eyes, and therefore they cheriſh themſelves in Wickedneſs. And the Virtue of *David* is by himſelf aſcribed to this, that *All God's Judgments were* conſtantly *before him*, and therefore *he kept the Ways of the Lord, and did not depart from his God, as the Wicked do.* No wonder then, if the Fear of God, which produces ſuch excellent Effects, be termed the beginning of Religious Wiſdom; No wonder if the Prophet beg of God throughly to poſſeſs his Heart with this Principle, the moſt powerful Check to all Evil, and the fruitful Source of all Holy Diſpoſitions. St. *Paul*, after declaring to the *Corinthians*, *That we muſt all*

Pſal. 18. 21, 22. Pſal. 111.

2 Cor. 5. 10, 11.

all appear before the Judgment Seat of Christ, there to receive according to the Things done in our Body, proceeds, *Knowing therefore the Terrour of the Lord, we perſwade Men.* And St. *Peter*, after deſcribing the Holineſs and Majeſty of God adviſes thus, *If ye call upon the Father, who without reſpect of Perſons judgeth according to every Man's Work, paſs the time of your ſojourning here in fear.* A neceſſary Admonition, no doubt, to all, but eſpecially to thoſe who by their ſinful Practices, have provoked the Divine Diſpleaſure, and rendred themſelves obnoxious to the ſeverity of his Juſtice. For if once they fall finally, or die in that State, there remains no more Remedy for their Sin and Miſery. And what Wiſe Man then would not fear exceedingly? Who would ſuffer himſelf to Eat, and Drink, and be Merry, till he had diſcharged his Soul of that heavy Burden, and made Peace between God and his Conſcience? How dangerous is his Condition till this be done? How many Ways may he fall into the Hands of that God, who is a conſuming Fire? A Tile from a Houſe, as he walks the Streets; A Slip of a Horſe, as he travels upon the Road; the Aſſault of an Enemy, or a Robber that he thinks not of; a Cold, or a Surfeit, or any other Diſtemper; Any one Accident of a Million that may befall him, may bereave him of this Life, and hurry him in a Moment into everlaſting Flames. And is not this then a State to be dreaded? Is not this a Danger that requires our utmoſt Care to prevent? Moſt true certainly is that of the Wiſeman, *Happy is the Man that feareth alway, but he that hardeneth his Heart ſhall fall into Miſchief.*

1 Pet. 1. 17.

Heb. 12. 29.

Prov. 28. 14.

"Lord, of thy Mercy, Grant us Grace, to "fear thee as we ought; and ſo to conſider thy

"Juſtice

"Juſtice and Judgments, that we may anſwer "the End of all thy Threatnings. That ſo we "may avoid Sin, and not delay our Repentance, "but ſet about thy Service, whilſt thou art con- "tent to accept us. Pardon, O Lord, our paſt "Offences, and ſtrengthen our Reſolutions of "better Obedience for the time to come: that "we may not put off this neceſſary Work, "till the door be ſhut againſt us; nor ſuffer thoſe "precious opportunities to ſlip through our "Hands; which when once loſt, can never be "retriev'd. O help us to ſee, and ſeriouſly to "conſider the things that belong to our peace, "before Thou, provoked by our wicked De- "lays, give us up to a Spirit of Deluſion and "Impenitence, and hide them eternally from "our Eyes.

CHAP. IX.

Some other Aggravations of Sin, particularly the Majeſty of God, and the Benefits we receive from Him.

THough the much greater part of Chriſtians do not, it is to be feared, arrive at *David's* Perfection of placing *all their delight in God's Commandments*, (which yet would be the certain effect of a virtuous Life, and a good Conſcience) yet is it fit that all ſhould make that Confeſſion at leaſt, *Righteous art Thou, O Lord,* Pſal. 119. *and juſt are thy Judgments.* For which reaſon I ſhall enlarge a little more upon the Greatneſs of our Offence, in ſinning againſt our God; and vindi-

vindicate his Juſtice, in avenging it, ſo terribly (as you have heard) when we do ſo.

It hath been already obſerved, That every Crime is more grievous, as the Perſon injured by it is greater, and the Party tranſgreſſing is more mean and vile. To which purpoſe we find the Laws of God uſhered in by ſuch Prefaces as theſe: *I am the Almighty God, walk before me, and be thou perfect. Heaven is my Throne, and Earth is my Foot-ſtool.* And again, *Be not ſtiff-necked, for the Lord your God is God of Gods, and Lord of Lords; a Great God, a Mighty, and a Terrible, who regardeth not perſons, nor taketh reward.* Conſider then what an infinite Majeſty, Thou, poor Worm of the Earth, haſt ſo often and ſo contemptuouſly offended, and tremble at thy Preſumption. We ſee none ſo bold, as openly to affront an Earthly Prince, at leaſt in his own preſence. But what are all the Princes of the Earth to the thouſandth part of God's incomprehenſible Majeſty; who with one word made Heaven and Earth, and every Creature; and can with the ſame Eaſe deſtroy and command all theſe back into nothing again. Whoſe Beck the Powers of Heaven and Earth obey, and at whoſe frown the very Pillars that ſuſtain this vaſt Frame, ſhake and tremble. The Sinner is the only Creature that dares to harden himſelf in oppoſition to this Univerſal Monarch; and every time he commits a wilfull Sin, he does defy this Glorious Majeſty, and withſtand him to the Face. A Majeſty ſo tranſcendently great, that no mortal Eye can ſee him; before *whom Hell is naked*, and the *Power of whoſe thunder none can underſtand.*

Gen. 17. Iſa. 66. Deut. 10.

Job. 26.

Imagin then this King ſitting on his Throne, clothed with Light inacceſſible, and encompaſs'd with

with millions of Angels, and Chariots of flaming Fire. Imagine, that thou ſeeſt all Creatures trembling at his preſence, and moſt obſequiouſly attending to the reſpective Offices aſſigned them to diſcharge. Imagin again, that thou ſeeſt all theſe entirely depending upon his Pleaſure, acting and ſubſiſting only by that Virtue, which ſtreams out perpetually from this Fountain of all Life and Power; this glorious and reſplendent Sun, whoſe Beams warm the greateſt Angel, and the leaſt Spire of Graſs, the higheſt and the loweſt Beings, into Exiſtence and Activity; and think, thou ſeeſt all theſe drooping, dying, vaniſhing into nothing, if He, but for one moment think fit to withdraw his enlivening and ſuſtaining Influence. This will give thee ſome, but even all this will not give thee a worthy and adequate Idea of the Divine Majeſty; of the Univerſal Homage and dread paid to him, to which the preſumptuous Sinner is the only exception upon Earth. But yet This may ſuffice to abate thy wonder at the Severe Vengeance reſerved for this unexampled Rebel. For how unaccountably do we deal with that Terrible Majeſty, when the Awe of Him will not reſtrain us, ſo much as the preſence of the meaneſt of our Brethren upon Earth: When *we are afraid of a Man that ſhall die, and the Son of Man who ſhall be made as graſs, and forget the Lord our Maker?* This is ſuch an Abſurdity in Behaviour, as ſtrikes at the very Root of all Religion, and accordingly is by God himſelf charg'd upon the *Jews*, as a plain Evidence of their Unbelief. For ſo the Prophet is order'd to reprove them: *Hear now this, O fooliſh People and without underſtanding, which have Eyes and ſee not, which have Ears and hear not; Fear ye not me? ſaith the Lord,* Jer. 5. 21, &c.

Lord, will ye not tremble at my presence, which have placed the Sand for a bound of the Sea, by a perpetual Decree, that it cannot pass it; and though the waves thereof toss themselves, yet can they not prevail; though they roar, yet can they not pass over it: But this People hath a faithless and rebellious Heart. And *David* assigns this, as the reason why foolish Men were become *corrupt and abominable in their wickedness, that they said in their Heart, There is no God.* So that, thus far at least, this horrid depravation of Manners and Security in sinning, proceeds from want of Faith, that such Men do not consider God as he is. For had they lively and vigorous Idea's of that Holy, that Powerful, that Terrible Majesty, which the Scriptures describe him to be, they could not possibly break loose from the restraints of these Impressions, but must of necessity fear to offend and provoke Him.

Jer. 5. 22.

Psal. 14. 53.

Sect. II.

Of the Benefits we receive from Almighty God.

THis Consideration, added to the Former, will be an exceeding Aggravation of our Wickedness. To injure them that do us Good, is so detestable, so monstrously unnatural, that that the very fiercest of Brutes are won by Kindness; and much more do reasonable Creatures find themselves Charmed by it; especially if it come from Great Persons, the Honour and Advantage of whose Favour renders Gifts, otherwise very small, infinitely obliging to the Receivers. And therefore every Christian, upon this occasion will do well to reflect, what he hath received at the Bountiful Hands of the Great

Great God. All which was given, with a Deſign of engaging Men to live, and ſerve him faithfully. And, though no Tongue can expreſs the half of thoſe Gifts we have all received, nor eſtimate them according to their juſt Value; nor conceive the greatneſs of the Love that beſtowed them; yet for the refreſhment of my Reader's Memory, and exciting him the more effectually to Gratitude, I will juſt name ſome general Topicks, taken from the principal and moſt viſible Inſtances of God's Goodneſs, to which the reſt may be referred as they occur to each Perſon's Remembrance.

Firſt then, Conſider the Benefit of thy Creation: That God framed thee out of Nothing, into the likeneſs of himſelf; that he intended thee for the nobleſt Purpoſe, to ſerve him in this, and to reign with him in the next Life: And that, for the attainment of theſe glorious Ends, he hath made his other Creatures thy Subjects and Servants. If this Reflection affect thee but coldly, quicken it with an Imagination, that any one part of thy Body, or any one of thy Senſes were wanting: What Notion wouldſt thou have of thy Friend's Kindneſs, if he could help thee to a Leg, or an Arm, or an Eye? How wouldſt thou eſteem thy ſelf, beholding to One, who reſtored thy Hearing, when Deaf; thy Speech, when Dumb; thy Sight, when Blind. And if the giving any one of theſe muſt needs be taken for an Eternal Obligation, learn from hence to value the miraculous Bounty of that Maker and Preſerver, who hath beſtowed, and for ſo many Years together continued all theſe ſeveral Parts and Powers; and the many more, of which thou art compounded, in their Free uſe and full Perfection.

Con-

Consider again, that he hath made thee in the resemblance of no less an Excellence than himself; that the Service he requires from thee at present, is both Honourable and Advantagious; and that the Crown laid up for those who serve him faithfully, shall last to all Eternity: And what is Earth and Ashes, that this should be admitted to reign with God in Glory? Who can conceive the boundless Ocean of that Love, which makes us capable of such vast Advantages, and hath prepared for us the utmost Happiness we are capable of? Consider once more, what a Magnificent World is contrived for thy Use and Service; the Heavens give thee Light, the Earth, and Air, and Water furnish unspeakable variety of Creatures, for thy Sustenance and Delight; Thus hath he furnished thy Dwelling Richly, and all, to assist thee in his Service, or to render that Service pleasant and easie, by their Comforts. And now I appeal to thy own Conscience, whether it be not most unpardonable Ingratitude, to abuse the Kindness which hath bestowed so numerous, so noble Gifts upon thee; and what can be too bad for those, who make these very Creatures Instruments of Injury and Dishonour to their and our common Master and Maker, which his Liberality gave on purpose, to encourage Men in his Service, and for promoting his own Glory?

2. But happier were it for us never to have been Created, if this Good God had not added the Second and better Benefit of our Redemption. For by this, we regain all those former Advantages, which Sin had forfeited and lost; We are saved from that Eternal Destruction, to which that had made us liable; our Faults are expiated by the most astonishing Satisfaction

tisfaction of the Blood of God, and our Ranſom, paid by his bitter and opprobrious Death upon the Croſs. Bleſſed Jeſus! who can worthily comprehend this ineſtimable Goodneſs, this moſt amazing Condeſcenſion! Suppoſe then, Chriſtian Reader, that a poor Slave had, in combination with ſome of the chief Nobility, committed horrible Crimes againſt his Prince; but he had repeated thoſe Crimes often, they offended but once. When theſe Offenders were all convict, and ready to ſuffer for their Faults, ſuppoſe this mighty King delivering up his Nobles to Juſtice, but diſpoſed to Save and Pardon that deſpicable Slave; Nay, to do Honour to his Laws, laying all the Penalty, the Shame, the Torments, due to this Wretch upon his only Son, and the Heir of all his Kingdoms. What ſort of Reſentment muſt ſuch a ſtrange extending of Mercy create? But if that Son, refuſing to intercede for thoſe Peers, ſhould, not only accept moſt chearfully, but earneſtly entreat, that all the Diſgrace and Puniſhment due to this wretched Slave, might be laid upon himſelf; ſhould voluntarily die to atone for his Offences, nay, to exalt him to a Part in his own Honour, to make him *Heir* to his Father, and *Co-heir* with himſelf, is it poſſible, were this thy own Caſe, to conceive, how thou wouldſt love and ſerve ſuch a Benefactor ever after? Could any thing, after this unſpeakable Grace, tempt thee willingly to diſpleaſe ſo kind a Lord? And yet this is thy Caſe; nay it is infinitely leſs engaging than thine. Thy Redemption is a greater Mercy than any temporal Deliverance; the Kindneſs and Condeſcenſion of the Son of God infinitely greater, than that of the greateſt Emperour upon Earth could

poſſibly be; yet is this forgotten, yet is this by many thought not worth remembring; yet is this Saviour injured and offended daily. So eaſy is the Application to our ſelves; ſo monſtrous is the Ingratitude of every Sinner.

3. Let us, in the next Place, lay to Heart the mighty Benefit of our Chriſtian *Vocation*, by which I mean that infinite Mercy of God, whereby we are called out of the Darkneſs of Ignorance and Infidelity, to the Knowledge and Light of the Goſpel; Which makes us actual Partakers, and conveys to us a full right to the Advantages of this Redemption. Now the Caſe with Infidels is far otherwiſe; for, though Chriſt have paid down a Ranſom for all Mankind in general, yet are not all within the ordinary Conditions of obtaining it; but ſuch only as it beſt pleaſes his Divine Goodneſs to Inſtruct in his Goſpel, and make the Means on Man's Part knowable and practicable to them.

4. After which Mercy of calling Men to the Truth, Upon their Sincere Acceptance and Obedience, there follows another Inſtance of the Divine Goodneſs, which is the *Juſtification* of Believers. By this they are releaſed from the Guilt and Penalty of all their paſt Sins: they are ſtrengthen'd and enriched with Acceſſions of Divine Grace; they grow in all Virtues neceſſary for their Practice; they are grounded in Faith, and Hope, and Charity; made Righteous in God's Sight, and entitled to his Heavenly Kingdom. So that, if a Man look at his own Private Advantage, this is more deſirable than even the two former Mercies. For, what would it profit us to be Created and Redeemed, if we be not called and admitted to Partake of that Redemption? Or, what would the

the Knowledge and Capacity of this Salvation avail, if God's free Mercy and Grace did not juſtify and adopt us for his own? So that theſe are the Completion of the former, becauſe they finiſh the Work begun in them, and bring the Matter home to our own actual and particular Advantage.

5. There are, beſides theſe, infinite other moſt valuable Privileges, peculiar to the true Friends and Children of God: Among which we muſt not fail to reckon the bleſſed Sacraments of our Religion; Left by our Bleſſed Lord for our mighty Benefit and Comfort, the one to let us in, the other to preſerve and ſuſtain us when we are incorporated in to his Church. Theſe are the ſure Pledges of his Love, the lively Signs and Memorials of his Death, the ſacred Pipes, through which God infuſes his Grace into our Souls. The firſt cleanſes us from Sin, and knits us to Chriſt, as Members of his Myſtical Body, waſhed in the Water of Regeneration, and made meet by this new Birth for the Kingdom of God. The other conveys to us the moſt precious Food of his own Fleſh and Blood, remiſſion of our Sins after Baptiſm, and all other Benefits of his Paſſion. This ſtrengthens and ſuſtains us, repairs our Spiritual Decays, and fills us with Joy and Peace in believing, and unites us in the ſtricteſt tyes of Friendſhip, and Union, and Chriſtian Charity. Theſe are Jewels of ſo great Price, Means of ſuch ſingular Efficacy, that the Worldly and Carnal cannot underſtand them; but, they, whoſe Knowledge and Experience hath thus far enlightned them, think no Treaſures upon Earth comparable to them. And thoſe wretched People, who, through Neglect, or for any

Temporal Conſideration, deprive their Souls of theſe unſpeakable Advantages, are greatly to be Blamed, greatly to be Pitied; for this Loſs, if not repaired in time, will be everlaſting and irrecoverable.

6. Let us reflect yet farther, what infinite Dangers the Good Providence of God hath preſerved us from, which others have fallen into; and which, if not plucked back by his Hand, we were ruſhing into our ſelves. The Spiritual Dangers, I mean, and thoſe Snares of eternal Damnation, which nothing, but his protection and preventing Grace, could ever have defeated. Or, if we have been overtaken and fallen foully, yet hath he not ſuffered us to be ſurpriſed with Death and Judgment, nor ſnatched us away in the midſt of our Sins, which hath been the Caſe of many Thouſands now in endleſs Torments, and ſuch as we can give our ſelves no Account, why our Souls ſhould be more precious in the ſight of God, than theirs. To this we may add all the ſecret Motions and Methods of inciting us to do well; whereby God hath either knocked inwardly at the Door of our Hearts, by inſpiring good Deſires; or warned us outwardly, by the Means and Miniſtry of others; ſuch as Good Sermons, Good Books, the Advice of our Friends, the Reproaches of our Enemies, the Virtuous Examples of the Godly, and the terrible Afflictions and ſad Ends of the Profligate and Wicked. All which are of uſe, and were intended for the Advantage of our Souls, to draw us to a Love of himſelf, to engage us irrevocably in his Service, to beget in us a due deteſtation of Vice, an to exalt us at laſt to his Holy and Heavenly Kingdom.

Be-

Beſides theſe the many temporal Bleſſings of Health, Friends, Reputation, competent Proviſion, or the like, which every Man's own Circumſtances make peculiar to himſelf, we ſhall do well to recollect as we can. And though the Summ be infinite, yet theſe Benefits do not more require a grateful return upon the Account of their Number, than they do with regard, to their ineſtimable Value conſidered in themſelves; to the boundleſs Love and Liberality of the Giver, and the vileneſs of the Receiver in compariſon to his Glorious Majeſty. Theſe ought all to excite in us vehement Affections and Deſires to appear ſenſible, how much we owe to this Benefactor; by ſerving him unfeignedly, and preferring his Favour before all worldly Conſiderations whatſoever. But, if we cannot bring our ſelves thus far neither, yet the leaſt we can poſſibly do, is to reſolve that we will not any more affront and do deſpight, by the inſolence of a wicked Life, to Him, who hath thus manifeſted to us the Riches of his Goodneſs, and loved us with ſo beneficial, ſo wonderful a Love. The lewdeſt Lord upon Earth, if he gave one of his Cottagers a Farm of Five or Ten Pounds Yearly Rent, would exclaim upon that Tenant for a Beaſt of a Fellow, if he were not at his Service all his Life after: But, if inſtead of ſerving, he ſhould wilfully give him offence; if he ſhould take Part againſt him, and ſtrike up a moſt intimate Friendſhip with his profeſt Enemy, how would this Man of Honour reſent ſuch baſe Uſage? And yet, I muſt make bold to tell his Lordſhip, that, as little as he makes of the Matter, his Behaviour is ten thouſand times more brutiſh and baſe to Almighty God. He hath received from that

hand more than Ten Thouſand-fold, above what any one Man can contribute to the Advantage of any other Man. For what hath he indeed, which he hath not received from thence? The Bread he Eats, the Ground he treads on, the Lands he falſely calls his own, the Light he walks and acts by, the Air he draws in; in a Word, all the Comforts and Advantages both of Body and Mind, nay that very Mind it ſelf, and all its noble Faculties, each of which, how miſerably ſoever neglected, is of more Value than Ten thouſand Bodies. And a moſt prodigious Thing it is, that any who write *Man*, and pretend to Reaſon at all, ſhould not conſider, and be ſenſible of its Worth. No wonder, after all this, if God complain in ſo pathetical a Manner in Scripture, of this abominable Ingratitude; if he ſummon all the Creatures together, to behold and ſtand amazed at it, and upbraid Men with thoſe better Examples, ſet them by the Beaſts themſelves. And thus we find him doing in the moſt moving and affectionate Terms imaginable. *Hear O Heavens, and give Ear, O Earth,* i. e. be aſtoniſhed at this incredible impiety; *I have nouriſhed and brought up Children, and they have rebelled againſt me. The Ox knoweth his Owner, and the Aſs his Maſters Crib*; *but* Iſrael *doth not know, my People doth not conſider. Ah! ſinful Nation, a People laden with Iniquity, a Seed of Evil-doers, they have forſaken the Lord, they have provoked the holy one of* Iſrael *to anger.*

Iſa. 1.

If then, my Friends, there be any remains of Grace or common Ingenuity in us, let us forbear to offend him, who hath been ſo unſpeakably kind to us; let us ceaſe at laſt to render Evil for Good, Hatred for Affection, Contempt for

this

this more than Fatherly Care over us. He hath done for us the utmoſt that even Almighty Power could do: He hath given us as much as our Condition is capable of receiving; nay, he hath imparted to us his very ſelf. He hath ſtill great and ineſtimable Benefits in reſerve for us; even the Treaſures and Glory of the Life to come; and all the Requital he expects is only Gratitude and Love. And ſhall we grudge to make this Poor Return? Shall we think much to do that for our God and Maker, which we count it a Reproach to be behind-hand in to an Equal, a Brother? Nay, which we look upon our ſelves bound to do for leſs than the Tenthouſandth Part of what we enjoy from that bountiful Giver of all good Gifts? Even an Alms at our Gate is eſteemed to deſerve Thanks, and none of us would bear a relieved Beggar flying in our Faces; And yet, as Helpleſs and Poor are we, as truly ſuſtained by relief from above, and much more inſolent and inſupportable, when offending againſt that bountiful Author of our Life, and all our Comforts.

But indeed I may add, that though we ſet aſide all thoſe Engagements, God hath infinite other Charms, which ought to attract our Love: For nothing can contribute to recommend any thing to our Affections, which is not in him, in an incomparably higher Degree. Were all the Excellences of Heaven and Earth united in one, the Beauty, the Wiſdom, the Virtue, the Greatneſs, the Goodneſs, the Uſefulneſs and Advantage of every Creature, yet ſtill that Lord and Saviour, whom the Sinner treats with Contempt, is infinitely more to be valued and admired. For he does not as they do, partake only of all theſe Perfections, but is the

very Things in the Abſtract; Beauty, and Wiſdom, and Greatneſs, and Goodneſs, and Happineſs it ſelf; the Source of all theſe; and what Degrees of them ſoever other Things attain to, they are only ſuch Meaſures of Excellence, as this inexhauſtible Fountain of Good ſees fit in his Wiſdom to impart to each of them.

Bluſh then, ungrateful inſenſible Wretch, at thy unworthy Behaviour, to ſo Great, ſo Good, ſo Bountiful a Lord, and reſolve from this Inſtant to change thy Courſe of Life, and make ſome ſuitable Amends for thy former unſeemly Deportment toward him. Come before his Preſence with confuſion of Face, and beſeech him with the Prophet, *To be merciful to thy Sin, for it is exceeding great.* Underſtand at laſt how great an Enemy thou haſt been to thy ſelf; that without his Mercy thou canſt not ſubſiſt; and that there is no ſuch fatal Bar to that Mercy, as Ingratitude for Favours formerly vouchſafed thee. If this have proceeded from Ignorance, learn thy Duty, and the dependance of thy Condition; If from Thoughtleſneſs, apply thy ſelf ſeriouſly to conſider what wonderful Things thy Lord hath done for thee, and what Account, what Improvement he will expect from them. And, ſince to all his other Mercies God hath been pleaſed to add this one more, of making thee ſenſible of thy paſt Errour, and allowing thee Time and Opportunity for correcting it: Follow the Directions of this Heavenly Grace, and ſhew thy ſelf a better and more obedient Child for the time to come. Say within thy own Breaſt, 'I am vanquiſhed, O my God, 'at length with the ſight of thy aſtoniſhing Love; 'and hope I ſhall never have the Heart to diſ-

Pſal. 25. 10.

'pleaſe

'pleaſe thee any more: Thee, my only, my 'beſt Friend; who haſt prevented me with the 'Bleſſings of Goodneſs, and ſo much exceeded 'my Requeſts and largeſt Wiſhes. O! that 'theſe Hands of mine, when they attempt any 'Wicked Thing, may always be reſtrained by 'the powerful Image of thoſe Divine Hands, 'which for my ſake were Nailed to the Croſs! 'O that my Heart, when diſpoſed to any cor-'rupt Inclination, may be ſoftened by the view 'of that Heart, full of Tenderneſs and Mercy, 'which was pierced to yield ſtreams of Blood 'for waſhing my polluted Soul. It is too much, 'my deareſt Jeſus, that I have neglected the 'Force of theſe moving Arguments heretofore, 'and I am heartily ſorry and aſhamed to have 'lived ſo little to him, who was content to die 'for me. But by thy gracious Aſſiſtance I hope 'to relapſe into my former Folly and Ingrati-'tude no more; and do beg, that thy Love may 'for ever hereafter commit a holy Violence up-'on my Soul, and conſtrain me to a thankful 'Obedience. To which Reſolutions, frail alas! 'and fickle in themſelves, I beg that thou wilt 'add Strength and Stedfaſtneſs, and from thy 'Throne in Heaven ſay, *Amen.*

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

Of the time of our Death: And the different Notions we ſhall then have of the Matters relating to our Souls.

THE Scriptures frequently obſerve, and our own daily Experience abundantly proves, that, while Men are in Health and Vigour, the Pleaſures and Buſineſs, and Enjoyments of this World take faſt hold of their Minds, and defeat all the Arguments poſſible to be urged, for their Care and Concern about Death and a future State. And too often it happens, that all the Evidence of Reaſon and Religion, all the Threatnings and Warnings of the Book of God, have little or no Effect, for the bringing Men off from a ſettled Courſe of Vice, and their moſt fatal ſecurity in Sinning. *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, *Pharaoh* and his *Ægyptians*, the Traitor *Judas* and ſome others ſtand upon Record, as laſting Monuments of inflexible Obſtinacy; Such as no Methods of Gentleneſs can win, no Exhortation perſwade, no Threatnings or Judgments affright into a Change of their wicked and deſperate Reſolutions. The Prophets eſpecially are full of Complaints, concerning the inefficacy of their Preaching, and the impenetrable Hardneſs of their People's Hearts; I will at preſent only mention one paſſage of *Zechariah*, by which we may make ſome Judgment of the reſt. *They refuſed to Hearken, and pulled away the Shoulder, and ſtopped their Ears, that they ſhould not hear; Yea, they made their Hearts as an Adamant-ſtone, leſt they ſhould hear the Law, and the Words which the Lord*

Zech. 7. 11, 12.

Lord of Hoſts hath ſent in his Spirit by the former Prophets; therefore came a great Wrath from the Lord of Hoſts. Now the ſame diſmal Conſequence, which purſued the Jew's Diſobedience then, will not fail to overtake every obdurate Sinner, who makes it a point of Bravery, to hold out againſt all the Methods deſigned for his Amendment. If they will allow no Place to ſerious Thoughts, while Health and Proſperity laſt; there will ſhortly come a Day, in which God will be heard and known, whether they will or not; Even then, when he begins to execute his Juſtice: And that he manifeſtly does, at the time of ſuch perſons Death; which puts an end to the ſeaſon of Tryal and Forbearance, and turns them over to that Judgment, upon which the whole of their Eternal Concern depends.

This then is properly God's Day, a Day full of Terrour, and Sorrow, and ſore Diſtreſs, to the Wicked; wherein the Righteouſneſs of our Judge ſhall diſcloſe it ſelf, and every Man ſhall be recompenced according to his Deeds. Then it is, that *he cuts off the Spirit of Princes, and is terrible among the Kings of the Earth.* A Day, that will work a mighty Change in all other Points; when Mirth ſhall be turned into Weeping, Pleaſure into Pains; Sturdineſs into Fear, Pride into Deſpair; but in no Reſpect will the Alteration be greater, than in the Senſe and Opinion of Men's Minds.

The Wiſdom of God, which is now ſo diſparaged, and *run down for Folly by the Wiſe of this World*, will then appear in her Native Beauty and full Luſtre; and by her greateſt Enemies and Deſpiſers, be acknowledged the True, the only Wiſdom: And all the pretended Wiſdom

of

of Carnal and Worldly Men ſhall then, too late, be confeſſed no better than Folly and Madneſs. A lively Image of this ſtrange Reverſe of Opinions, is left us by the Wiſeman, in the Perſon of ſuch, as at laſt diſcover their Errour; in deriding ſuffering and oppreſt Virtue, and meaſuring their own Happineſs by their preſent Temporal Proſperity. *We Fools accounted his* (the Goodman's) *Life madneſs, and his End to be without Honour. But how is he numbered among the Children of God, and his Lot is among the Saints! Therefore have we erred from the Way of Truth; and the Light of Righteouſneſs hath not ſhined to us, nor the Sun of Righteouſneſs roſe upon us. We wearied our ſelves in the Way of Wickedneſs and Deſtruction; yea we have gone through Deſarts, where there lay no Way; but as for the Way of the Lord, we have not known it. What hath Pride profited us? Or what Good hath Riches with our Vaunting brought us? For all thoſe Things are paſs'd away like a Shadow, and as a Poſt that haſteth by*, &c.

Wiſd. 5.4, 5,6,7,8,9.

Obſerve here how different theſe Men are become, from the Perſons they had been heretofore: How on a ſudden the Scene is changed; how they confeſs their Errour, lament their Folly, complain of Labour loſt, and Repentance too late to profit them. O! that the Children of this Generation would lay theſe Things ſeriouſly to Heart, before this fruitleſs Sorrow overtake them. How does this Deſcription ſet in a clear Light the wretched ſtate of Senſual and Worldly-minded Men, that beat their Brains, and break their Reſt, and waſt their Strength in a toilſom Purſuit of Trifle and Nothing; which yet they are at more Pains to compaſs, than would ſuffice a Good Man for the attaining Heaven and everlaſting Bliſs?

This

This Man's Labours follow and ſtick by him for ever: But ſee the difference; Theirs Deceive and Reproach them at the Laſt; and, when they are driven to the Brink of the Grave, when they are wearied and quite worn out, with reſtleſs Buſtle, and hard Drudgery, they find all their Pains employed to no Purpoſe, and the only Account they turn to, is Anguiſh and Vexation, and a ſelf-upbraiding Conſcience. The Delights they ſo eagerly purſued, are fled and gone; The little Droſs of Wealth they had raked up together, will do them no manner of Service in their Extremity; Nay 'tis well, if theſe Things do not add Weight to their other Afflictions. Which yet, in Wicked Men, are at that time ſo various, ſo heavy, ſo inſupportable, that none but he that feels them, can have any proportionable Idea of them: Yet becauſe ſome diſtant Conjectures may be made, enough to warn us to avoid them, though not enough to diſplay all their Horrour; I ſhall mention Two or Three of the moſt obvious, and leave my Reader to improve thoſe to his own Spiritual Advantage.

Firſt then, We may conſider that exceſs of Pain, without which theſe Souls and Bodies of ours are not ordinarily ſeparated. For theſe old Friends, whom long Converſation, and a tender fellow-feeling of each others Joys and Griefs, have mightily endeared, are never prevailed to part, till forced to it by the utmoſt Violence. And how raging, how intolerable do we imagin that Pain muſt needs be, which drives the Soul out by degrees; and beats it, like a Beſieged Commander, from one Entrenchment to another, till at laſt there be no Retreat, no Quarter to be had? And what Condition

ſhall

ſhall we ſuppoſe that Soul in, what Anxiety and Confuſion when her Strong-holds are broken down, and all her Friends forſake her? When Youth and Activity, Courage and Strength, Dyet and Phyſick, and all Humane Helps are now no more; but Night and Day the Batteries are playing, and no Ceſſation to be obtained till the goodly Fabrick be reduced to Aſhes.

Can it ſurpriſe us that ſuch Circumſtances ſhould ſhake the ſtouteſt Man, and Diſarm him of all his former Gaiety and Confidence? that People then ſhould put on other Thoughts; and after a Life negligently ſpent, reflect with Amazement upon what is paſſed, while the Power of Reflection continues? But even that is oftentimes utterly loſt, by extremity of Pain, and that oppreſſion of the Mind, which makes St. *Auguſtine*'s Advice highly neceſſary; and, well is it for my Reader, if he be perſwaded to follow it.

Serm. 48. ad Frat. En irem. 'When your laſt Sickneſs aſſaults you, alas! 'how difficult a Thing will it be (ſays he) to 'repent of the Evil you have done, and the 'Good you have left undone? For then your Mind 'will be drawn another Way, and the whole 'Bent of it will naturally make to that Part, 'where the anguiſh of your Pain lies. There 'are many Obſtructions, which will defeat your 'Deſigns at that Melancholy time. The Suffer-'ings of the Body, the fear of Death, the 'ſight of your Children, the Tears of the Wife, 'the flattering Comforts of Friends, the diſ-'ſembled Hopes of Phyſicians, the Temptati-'ons of the Devil. And be aſſured, O Man, 'that the Impediments I here give thee warn-'ing of, thou wilt in thy own Perſon ſhortly 'Experience. And therefore I conjure thee, 'defer not thy Repentance till this laſt day. But,

ſet

'ſet thy Houſe in order, and make thy Will in 'time of Health; whilſt thou haſt Leiſure to 'think, while thou art thine own Man; for now 'thou goeſt whither thou wilt, but then thou 'ſhalt be bound Hand and Foot, and carried 'whither thou wouldſt not.

2. A *Second* Conſideration, which renders Death exceeding terrible to Worldly and Wicked Men, is the ſudden and eternal parting from all, that in this Life were eſteemed moſt valuable and dear to them: Their Eſtates, and Honours, and Preferments; ſtately Houſes, gay Cloths, rich Jewels; their Relations, Friends and Acquaintance, in a word, all thoſe Conveniences and Delights, the Enjoyment whereof made them think themſelves happy Men. And now, To be torn from all theſe roughly and all on the ſuddain, to take an everlaſting Farewel, without Hope or poſſibility of ſeeing them any more (and that perhaps at a time too when the Man was under no Apprehenſions at all of ſo fatal a Blow) muſt needs be a very ſenſible Calamity. The Son of *Sirach*'s Obſervation upon this Caſe is well weighed; *O Death how bitter is the Remembrance of thee to a Man that liveth at Reſt in his Poſſeſſions; unto the Man that hath nothing to vex him, and that hath Proſperity in all Things!* O dreadful Sentence to the Worldly and Gay, the Voluptuous and Secure, who dreams of nothing but full Stores, and long Life, and continued Happineſs, when a Voice ſhall alarm him, like that in the Goſpel, *Thou Fool! this Night ſhall thy Soul be required of thee; then whoſe ſhall theſe things be, which thou haſt provided.* And yet ſo deplorable, our Lord tells us, is the State of every one, who *layeth up Treaſures for himſelf, and is not Rich towards God.* Eccluſ. 41. 1. Luk. 12. 20, 21.

It

It is not poſſible for mine, or any mortal Tongue, to expreſs the Terrours of thoſe laſt Minutes; when ſuch People find, that nothing of all their Labour will avail them any longer: when the very Things in which before they vainly placed their Confidence, now only ſerve to awaken many afflicting Remembrances in their Mind; when they muſt not only leave theſe behind, but go themſelves to give an Account, how they were got, and how they have been uſed: when others ſhall enjoy the Fruit of that Care, which now perhaps is exchanged for everlaſting Torments. Jeſus defend us! what a parting muſt this be! what ſhall we ſay or do, if our Pomp, our Wealth, our Honour, and Applauſe, come to ſo ſad an End! What is the Man now the better, for having lived in Luxury and Pleaſure with his Companions, in favour with Princes, or in credit with the World; ſince, at this fatal Inſtant, all that Jollity is damped, all his Pride brought down to the Ground, all his former Felicity come to a Period, and as if, nay much worſe than if, it had never been at all?

3. There is yet a *Third* Aggravation to the Miſery of this day more uncomfortable than either of thoſe already mentioned, and that is the Conſideration of what will become of ſuch a Man, both in reſpect of his Body and his Soul. For the former, it muſt needs be a very mortifying Reflection, that the only Inheritance left for this, *Is creeping Things, and Beaſts, and Worms*, that this Body, formerly Fed and Cloathed with ſo much niceneſs and delicacy; that object of Vanity and Pride, thought too good for any of the Diſcipline or Auſterities of Religion, muſt now be abandoned of it's beſt Friends, become

Eccluſ 10. 2.

come a common Nuiſance, and fatted up for a Prey to Rottenneſs and Vermin. When the Prophet's threatning ſhall be fulfilled in the moſt literal Senſe of the Words; *The bravery of Ornaments taken away, and in ſtead of ſweet ſmell there ſhall be a ſtink; and inſtead of a Girdle, a Rent; and inſtead of a welſet Hair, Baldneſs; and Burning inſtead of Beauty.* Iſa. 3. 18, 24.

And yet all this is nothing, in compariſon of the Horrours and dreadful Apprehenſions how the Soul ſhall be diſpoſed of, at its departure out of this Body. The Thoughts, that ſhe is now hurrying away to the Judgment Seat of Almighty God, there to receive a Sentence of everlaſting Concern. And, when this comes to be yet more particularly conſider'd, by comparing the Threatenings of God, with his own paſt Life; then the Danger puts on a dreadful Face indeed: When he begins to examin his own Conſcience, and finds the infinite Offences, which this is ready to teſtify againſt him, at his Appearance before that Court of Juſtice: When his Sins ſtare him in the Face, and all the Woes denounced againſt them come freſh into his memory: When the Tempter, who induſtriouſly kept theſe Things out of his Thoughts before, to detain him in Vice; ſhall urge and amplify them all to drive him to deſpair; ſhall now not this Man (think you) labour under Agonies inſupportable at his paſſage out of the World? and may we not conclude St. *Auguſtin*'s deſcription of the Caſe to be very juſt, and his exhortation upon it highly neceſſary and reaſonable? "If "you would be ſatisfied (ſays he) with "what fear and pain Soul and Body part, ob- "ſerve now what I am about to tell you; The "Angels at that Hour ſhall attend, to bring thy Devan. ſeculi.

"Soul before the Tribunal of a moſt dreadful "Judge. Then ſhall ſhe call to mind her Wick- "ed Actions, and begin to fear and tremble ex- "ceedingly. Moſt gladly would ſhe make her "eſcape and leave thoſe Actions behind her; "entreating the Angels to forbear her a while, "and begging the reſpite, though but of one poor "Hour. But this Requeſt cannot be heard, "and her Wickedneſs, crying out with one "Voice, ſhall ſay, *We are thy Works, and thou "haſt done us*, and We *will follow thee whitherſo- "ever thou goeſt, even to the very Seat of Judgment.* "This (my Friends) is the Condition of a ſin- "ful Soul, parting with its Body, in Amaze- "ment and Confuſion, and dragged along with "the Load of its Sins. But now, the Good "Man's Soul takes its flight with Comfort and "Joy, the Angels all the while conducting it "with Songs of Triumph. Since then theſe "Things are ſo; look forward to the hour of "Death with fear at this Diſtance, that when "it approaches you may meet it undauntedly. "Conſider and take care now, that then you may "enjoy profound Quiet and peaceful Security.

Since then this Remove out of this State of Mortality, is ſo formidable, ſo dangerous, and yet ſo certain and unavoidable; ſince ſo many periſh in croſſing this perilous Gulph; what Man of common Prudence would not make the Hazards and Miſeries of others, a Warning to himſelf? Who ſhall preſume to call himſelf a Reaſonable Creature, that will not look before him, and make ſome Proviſion for ſo important a Change? If thou art a Chriſtian, and doſt in good earneſt believe the Principles of the Religion thou profeſſeſt thy ſelf of; I need not tell thee, that no Age or State can exempt thee from

one

one day making the Experiment in thy own Perſon, of all I have now ſet before thee. Let not then Youth, or Health, or Greatneſs, or Pleaſure, or any other Treacherous Deluſion tempt thee to look upon what thou haſt read, as a Matter, in which thou art little concerned. But be very confident, that Sickneſs or Age will ſhortly confine thee to thy Bed; that Death is whetting thoſe Arrows, which all thy ſtrugglings will not be able, either to Conquer, or eſcape; that this Body of thine, now ſo tenderly loved, and ſo vainly indulged, muſt crumble into Duſt, and be devoured by Worms; and that thy Soul muſt, thou knoweſt not how ſoon, be ſummoned before the Juſt and Mighty God, there to render an Account for every Action of thy paſt Life.

SECT. II.

The Application of the former Section.

IT remains now, that we take due Care to apply the two former Conſiderations to our ſelves, for our own Advantage and Improvement. Which will beſt be done, by imagining this to be our own Caſe; and that we were even now at the very point of Death; forſaken of all our falſe Confidences, and expecting the next Moment, that ſtroke which muſt ſever us from them. This would ſhew us the Vanity of all theſe Trifles here below, and put us upon the many ſeaſonable Reflections ſuggeſted to us in Scripture. Think then that of the Prophet ſpoken to thee in particular. *Who ſhall have pity upon thee? or who ſhall bemoan thee? or who ſhall go to ask for thy Peace? Thou ſhalt forſake* Jer. 15. 5, 6.

me, ſaith the Lord, thou art gone backward; *there-*
Iſa. 10. 3. *fore will I ſtretch out my Hand againſt thee and de-*
ſtroy thee, I am weary of repenting. What will ye
do in the Day of Viſitation, and in the Deſolation
that ſhall come from far? to whom will ye flee for
help? and where will ye leave your Glory? What
Jer. 11. 12. is threatened to *Jeruſalem* will then be true of every Wicked and Worldly Man, *They ſhall cry unto the Gods to whom they offered Incenſe, but they ſhall not ſave them at all in the time of their Trouble.* Their powerful Friends, their agreeable Acquaintance, their Pleaſures, and Honours, their Wealth, thoſe Idols which they have ſet up to themſelves in this Life, and ſerved much more, than they did God, ſhall not be able to afford them the leaſt Comfort or Relief in this their extreme Diſtreſs. To this melancholy Condition, will thy Soul, (my Chriſtian Reader) very quickly be driven, if thou do not prevent it by timely Wiſdom and Diligence. To which purpoſe the Spirit of God hath left us Two very excellent Rules for our Direction.

The *Firſt* is, A Virtuous and truly Conſcientious Life; but particularly that of living profitably in our Generation, doing Good and abounding in Mercy and Charity to the Poor; One Reward of which is expreſly declared to
Rev. 14. 13. be an eaſy and happy Paſſage at the hour of Death. *Bleſſed are the Dead which die in the Lord* (ſays the Voice from Heaven) *for they ſhall reſt from their Labours, and their Works follow them.* And *David* obſerves this as the particular Priviledge of the charitable Man, That *the Lord ſhall ſtrengthen him when he lyeth upon the Bed of Languiſhing, and will make all his Bed in his Sickneſs.* A Bed of Languiſhing it is indeed, and deep Sorrow, ſuch as the broken Powers of

of drooping Nature are not ſufficient to hold up againſt: But this Bed ſhall be made ſoft and ſmooth, and all the Pains and reſtleſs Toſſings of it wonderfully compoſed, by the inward Support, which the ſweet Remembrance of a well ſpent Life, the Memorial of our Alms before God, and the Cheering Senſe of his Favour, ſhall then miniſter to the Godly and the Charitable Patient. Theſe are Things that will ſtick by us, and ſtand us in ſtead, when all other Comforts fail and forſake us, They engage the Juſtice of God on our behalf, and do in ſome Senſe render him our Debtor. For ſo St. *Paul* hath moſt emphatically expreſſed it, *God is not unrighteous, that he ſhould forget your Work and Labour of Love, which ye have ſhewed toward his Name, in that ye have miniſtred to the Saints, and do Miniſter.* i. e. Supply the Neceſſities of Good People in want. *And we deſire that every one of you do ſhew the ſame Diligence to the full aſſurance of Hope unto the End.* That laſt Clauſe is interpreted by ſome of that lively Expectation of future Happineſs, which this Virtue inſpires Men with, when they come to die. And what could be a more Powerful Inducement to any conſidering Chriſtian, to abound in theſe excellent Fruits, while he hath Life and Health, than that theſe will ſuſtain and buoy him up in the Conflict which he muſt ſhortly undergo with this laſt formidable Enemy; that theſe will diſarm this ſtrong invader of his Houſe; take out the Sting of that Death, which humane Nature is ſo wretchedly afraid of, and enable him, without confuſion or conſternation of Mind, to enter the Liſts againſt the *King of Terrours* himſelf? Heb. 6. 10, 11.

The Advantages of this ſingle Virtue are indeed repreſented in Scripture to be ſo many and

ſo great, that to inſtance in them all would be endleſs. That paſſage of our bleſſed Saviour to the Scribes and Phariſees, is very remarkable, Luk. 11. 41. *Give Alms of ſuch Things as ye have, and behold all Things are clean unto you.* And ſo is that of *Daniel* to King *Nebuchadnezzar*, Dan. 4. 27. *Wherefore O King, let my Counſel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy Sins by Righteouſneſs, and thy Iniquities by ſhewing Mercy to the Poor, if it may be a lengthening of thy Tranquility*, or (as the Margin renders it) *a healing of thine Errour.* Which Texts, though they do not by any means import, that Alms, without other Virtues, can render Men acceptable to God, or make any proper Satisfaction for the Offences of a profligate Life, yet ought we to gather from hence, that this is one of thoſe Fruits of Repentance, which of all others, is moſt likely to recommend us to his Favour and Grace; And thus we ſee it evidently was, in the Caſe of *Cornelius*, whoſe Converſion to the Truth St. *Peter* was ſent to effect through that Mercy of God, *to which* this Centurion's *Prayers and Alms* had inclined him. Acts 10. To the ſame effect is that of the Son of *Sirach*, Eccluſ. 3. 30. *Water will quench a burning Fire, and Alms make an Atonement for Sins.* That Diſpoſition which provokes us to them, is an Argument of our Love of God, when we are liberal to our Poor Brethren for his ſake. And this Love is the very Principle, by which Men turn from Sin, and obtain his Pardon, as all Sin argues hatred of God and is hateful to him. To all which I ſhall only need to add that application of the Parable concerning the unjuſt Steward, Luk. 16. 9. *Make to your ſelves therefore Friends of the Mamon of Unrighteouſneſs, that when ye fail, they may receive you into everlaſting Habitations.* Out of our Stewardſhip

ardſhip Death will certainly put us, and therefore the moſt provident Thing we can do, is to look out for ſome way of ſubſiſting, when that time comes; and this our Lord tells us will beſt be done, by ſecuring an Intereſt above, by the Good Uſe and bountiful Diſtribution of thoſe Goods of our Maſter, which we have at preſent in our Hands. But,

2. *Secondly*, Another Method to prevent the Terrours of Death, is frequently to have it in our Thoughts beforehand. It is a Rule in Nature, that all Objects are leſs apt to diſorder us, as we by Cuſtom have rendred them more familiar. And thus, by acquainting our ſelves with Death by Premeditation, keeping his Ghaſtly Face before our Eyes, and by converſing with, and by Degrees coming up cloſe to it, we might take off much from the frightfulneſs of the Object, and come to cure our ſelves of that Starting and Trembling, which ſtrangeneſs and ſurpriſe chiefly occaſion in us. This was *Job's* conſtant Practice; *All the Days of my appointed time will I wait, till my Change come.* He ſeems by thoſe Words to have made this Matter his great Study, and continually to be looking out, and obſerving how much nearer approaches this Change made toward him. And this Example might be, and no doubt is, by many, imitated with wonderful Succeſs. Nothing can be more idle, than that Pretence which vain and careleſs Men urge againſt this Practice; that it damps all their Mirth, breeds Melancholy, and takes away all the Enjoyment of Life. For, if *this bitter Cup may not paſs* from us, but drink it every one of us muſt; then ſure it is the greateſt Prudence to have it much in our Eye, and and to conſider how we may do it with Safety and Advantage. Job. 14.

Suppoſe Men all taking the ſame Journey to a Place of Happineſs and Reſt; and a certain River in the Way, not poſſible to be avoided, upon the paſſing of which all the Succeſs of their Travels depends; ſome moving gently into it, others plunging in all on the ſudden, but much the greater Part drowned in the croſſing; Would not a Wiſeman go and ſtand often upon the Bank, take as diligent View of the Place as he could, obſerve where the Fords and Shallows, and where the Holes and Whirlpools lie, take notice of thoſe that went before him, what Courſe they ſteered, who got well over, and where they miſtook their Way, who periſhed in the Water? For ſuch a weighty, ſuch a neceſſary Care as this, ſhall a Man loſe himſelf, for fear of daring to be ſerious? Are not thoſe Hours much better ſpent which ſecure him to his Journeys end, than thoſe, which keep him ignorant and thoughtleſs of his Danger? In the Caſe now propoſed, I am very confident all the World will agree with me; and yet in that other more hazardous, more important Paſſage, where People are daily coming, and all muſt come at one time or other, and where vaſt Multitudes (God knows) are miſerably caſt away, we are ſo ſtupidly negligent, ſo fooliſhly tender of giving our ſelves any preſent Uneaſineſs, that we cannot endure to think of it, nor ever concern our ſelves about the Matter, till we are drawn down to the very Brink, and muſt in whether we will or no.

Oh wretched Deluſion! Oh deplorable Indulgences! How many Thouſands who miſcarry everlaſtingly, might have been ſaved, and happy for ever; had they but taken the Pains to look before them, and view the Paſſage well,

while

while at ſome Diſtance from it? For great and many are the Benefits, which a frequent and ſerious Meditation of our latter End would bring to us. This ſhews Man, what he is, how frail and miſerable in his own Nature; how fond and vain in all thoſe big Conceits, which Health, and Youth, and Proſperity are apt to blow him up with. All other Glaſſes are falſe and counterfeit; but this is ſincere and Honeſt, and flatters none that conſult it. And hence it is that we are ſo often and ſo earneſtly adviſed to take Meaſure of our ſelves from: Becauſe the Meditation of Death is of univerſal Influence upon our Manners,, and corrects the Temper of our Minds: Particularly we may depend upon it, for theſe following Good Effects.

1. *Firſt*, It will keep us in a perpetual awe of God and Judgment, and under a provident expectation of dying.

2. *Secondly*, By this means we ſhall be cured of all that raſh unthinking Way of living, too commonly obſervable: Thus *Job* declares, that the Fear of Death had made him ſollicitous, and that he doubted his Works; Thus *David* begins a Pſalm upon Mortality, with *I ſaid I will take heed to my Ways that I offend not*; and St. *Paul* quickens Men up to Charity, and Moderation, by telling them, *They muſt do Good while they have time*; and that becauſe *the Faſhion of this World paſſeth away, and the Time is ſhort, therefore they ſhould take Care to uſe the World, as not abuſing it.* Pſal. 39. Gal. 6. 1 Cor. 7.

3. A *Third* excellent Effect is the Humbling us by a due Senſe of our own Vileneſs; ſhewing us how miſerably frail and fleeting we are. For what is Man, *whoſe Life is a Vapour, and* James 4.

whoſe

Pſal. 103. whoſe moſt flouriſhing Beauty *and Glory is but as a Flower of the Field*, which *aſſoon as the Wind paſſeth over, it is blaſted* and *gone*, and *the Place thereof ſhall know it no more.* He that bears his own Mortality much in Mind, will feel it work very ſenſibly upon his Vanity and his Paſſions, and ſay to himſelf with the wiſe Preacher, *Why is Earth and Aſhes proud? When he that is to day a King, to morrow ſhall die? Pride was not made for Men, nor furious Anger for them that are born of a Woman.*

Eccluſ. 10. 9, 10, 18.

4. A *Fourth* Advantage will be the Caſting off all anxious and unneceſſary Cares for the Things of this World, which thoſe Men are generally moſt addicted to, who leaſt think of leaving it. And this is, not only a Fault like other common Faults, but very often ſuch as God permits People to fall into by way of Puniſhment for ſome former Offence. So ſays *Solomon, God giveth to a Man that is good in his ſight, Wiſdom and Knowledge, and Joy; but to the Sinner he giveth Travel, to gather and to heap up.*

Eccleſ. 11. 26.

5. And this by Degrees will advance into a *Fifth* Good Fruit, which is, of all others, the moſt commendable and Chriſtian Diſpoſition; That, I mean of deſpiſing the Creatures in compariſon of the Creatour; weaning our Affections from the World, and ſetting them entirely upon God; Breathing out with *David*, *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is nothing upon Earth that I deſire in compariſon of thee. My Fleſh and my Heart faileth, but God is the ſtrength of my Life, and my Portion for ever:* And declaring, with St. *Paul*, *I eſteem all things as Dung that I may win Chriſt.*

Pſal. 73.

Phil. 3.

6. And thus at laſt we ſhall arrive to a *Sixth*, which is the laſt I ſhall mention at preſent; an In-

Indifference and Contempt, or, rather indeed, a Satisfaction in, and Desire for Death, This was likewise St. *Paul's* Case, *I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, which is far better.* So that, by living in a holy Awe and Fear of Death, which was the first Effect I mentioned, we advance by Degrees to a State of being perfectly contented with it, nay of thinking the time long, and earnestly wishing, that our Lord would in Mercy hasten his coming. And this frame of Mind is the highest Degree of Comfort and Happiness, possible for Good Men to attain to, while they are yet in a State of Mortality. And what need I say more to perswade my Reader, that he would be very frequent and serious in the Meditations of, and Provision for, this important Day? Observe how *Job* describes the security of the Good Man, *Thou shalt not be afraid of Destruction, when it cometh; At Calamity and Famine thou shalt Laugh, neither shalt thou be afraid of the Beasts of the Earth; For thou shalt be in League with the Stones of the Field, and the Beasts of the Field shall be at Peace with thee. Thou shalt know that thy Tabernacle shall be in Peace, and shalt come to thy Grave in a full Age, as a Shock of Corn cometh in his Season.* And a very significant Similitude this is, if we reflect, that a Good Man's Death is the first day of his Harvest, in which he begins to reap the Product of all those Good Deeds, which he hath sown in this Life, and which are then grown up to full Maturity and Prodigious increase. I conclude therefore this Point, as *Job* does that Chapter; *Lo, this we have searched, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy Good.*

Phil. 1.

Job. 4.

CHAP.

CHAP. XI.

Of the Sinners Puniſhment after this Life.

OF all the Means, which God is pleaſed to make uſe of for the reclaiming Men from a Wicked Courſe, and working them up to that holy Reſolution, which it is the Deſign of this Book to promote, none ſeem better calculated for the Frailty of Human Nature, than the Threatnings of Vengeance upon obſtinate Tranſgreſſours. This is, no doubt, the Reaſon, why Prophets at every turn, thunder out Plagues and Deſtruction to their back-ſliding People. And we can eaſily ſatisfy our ſelves, why this Method ſhould be more ſucceſsful than the reſt, becauſe it falls in ſo exactly with the Fundamental Principle of all our Actions: I mean the natural Love we bear to our ſelves, and conſequently the natural Fear of our own Danger and Ruine. Accordingly we have Inſtances of its prevailing upon very ſtubborn and diſingenuous Tempers. The City of *Niniveh* were preſently awaken'd into Repentance, when the Prophet *Jonas* foretold the Deſtruction of their City ſo nigh at Hand. And even Soldiers and Publicans, Men of Proof againſt other Impreſſions, came unto *John Baptiſt*, and were ſollicitous to know their Duty, and to ſave themſelves, upon his declaring that, *The Axe was laid to the Root of the Tree, and every Tree that brought not forth Good Fruit ſhould preſently be hewn down, and caſt into the Fire.* Upon this Account, after the Conſideration of our own Death, and

Luke 3.

and a Judgment to come, I cannot but think it may be of great uſe, to ſay ſomething, with regard to thoſe Puniſhments, which are reſerved for them that live and die impenitent.

And upon this Occaſion, I ſhall beſpeak my Reader, as St. *Bernard* did his Audience, "If "thou art loſt, O Man, (ſays he) to all Shame "and Modeſty, which yet are Principles be"coming ſo noble a Creature; if thou have a "feeling of Sorrow and Remorſe, which the "ſtupidity of carnal Minds is often dead to; "yet loſe not the impreſſions of Fear, which "are common even to the brute Beaſts. We "load an Aſs, and tire him out with his La"bour, and he careth not for it; but if we "would thruſt him into the Fire, or throw "him down a deep Precipice, love of Life, and "fear of Death, and natural Inſtinct, prevail "with even this otherwiſe inſenſible Creature, "to avoid and run away from it. Fear then at "leaſt, and be not more inſenſible, than this de"ſpiſed Animal. Fear Death, and Judgment, "and Hell: Fear is therefore called the begin"ing of Wiſdom, rather than Shame or Sor"row, becauſe this Paſſion is more powerful "than either of the other. *Remember the End,* Eccleſ. 7. "*and thou ſhalt never do amiſs,* ſays the Wiſe"Man; and ſure Men would not dare to ſin, if "they did but remember the Puniſhments after "this Life, in which a Wicked Courſe will end "at laſt.

1. *Firſt* then, As to thoſe Puniſhments in general, though the Scripture had not deſcribed the greatneſs of them at all to us, yet there are ſome Conſiderations, which our own Reaſon is capable of offering, ſufficient to convince us, that they will be exceeding ſevere and grie-

vous

vous to be Born. For *Firſt*, as God ſhews himſelf a God in all his Works, that is, Great and Wonderful, and Terrible; ſo we have Reaſon to think, he will not fail to do in his Puniſhments, after a very particular manner. Hence he hath diſtinguiſhed himſelf by thoſe Titles, *The God of Juſtice*, and *the God of Vengeance*. And *David* does not only confeſs, that we cannot ſubſiſt under his Anger, but exaggerates the Matter yet more, after a very elegant Manner.

Pſal. 90. 2. *Who can underſtand the Power of thy Wrath? for even thereafter as a Man feareth, ſo is thy Diſpleaſure.* Meaning that even the Paſſion of Fear it ſelf, though infinitely the moſt extravagant of all others, cannot yet exceed in this Point, nor form to it ſelf Images more dreadful, than are thoſe Miſeries, which they, who have provoked God, ſhall actually endure. And ſince his other Works of Majeſty ſo far tranſcend our utmoſt Capacity of conceiving them, we may infer, that his Hand, Almighty in puniſhing will not exert it ſelf leſs amazingly, than we ſee already it hath done, in other Inſtances of the ſame Almighty Power. And hence it is, that God himſelf calls upon Men to fear him from the Conſideration of his Omnipotence, manifeſted in the Wonders of the Creation, Intimating, that the Revenge he will one Day take upon thoſe, who harden their Hearts againſt this Fear, ſhall not fail to hold a Correſpondence and juſt Proportion with his other Works; and to exceed the utmoſt Stretch of humane Knowledge and Imagination, as thoſe plainly do.

Jer. 6. 22.

2. Another Meaſure of God's Severity in puniſhing may be taken from his marvellous and unſpeakable Mercy. For as this is the very Na-

ture

ture and Perfection of the Godhead, ſo likewiſe is Juſtice: and theſe Two as the Pſalmiſt expreſſes it, *Embrace and Kiſs each other:* that is, they are ſo tempered, as both to be Conſiſtent, and both to be Equal, that is, infinite in God. The many aſtoniſhing inſtances then of God's incomprehenſible Mercy, in ſaving and pardoning them that repent, and all he hath done for the bringing Men to the Knowledge and Fruition of himſelf; (with regard to which ſuch pardoned Offenders are ſtiled *Veſſels of Mercy:*) helps us to conceive the ſeverity of his Juſtice towards thoſe obdurate and impenitent Wretches, who will not be wrought upon by all his gracious Methods; and for that Reaſon are termed *Veſſels of Wrath*, i. e. Perſons *fitted for Deſtruction*, ripe for Vengeance, and ſuch as he reſolves to exerciſe his Rage and utmoſt Indignation upon.

3. A *Third* Conſideration to the ſame Purpoſe may be his Patience and Long-Suffering, which reſtrains him from cutting Men off in their Sins at preſent. He looks on now, as if he regarded not; and ſuffers many Wretches to go on from one Wickedneſs to another, from one Year to another, to live to a great Age in tranſgreſſing his Laws, and in contempt of his Divine Majeſty. He permits the perſwaſions of his Word, the Promiſes and Invitations, the Threatnings and Examples of his Anger, the good Motions of his Spirit and Grace, and all the means that infinite Goodneſs can deviſe for the gaining over Reaſonable Creatures, to be neglected, abuſed, deſpiſed, ridiculed. And can we think he will always endure this? Would any of our Brethren, our Equals bear the hundred Thouſandth Part of the Affronts we put upon God?

Among

Among us, 'tis a ruled Caſe, that Patience abuſed aggravates the Provocation, and the longer we ſpare, the more we think we have a Right to puniſh. And is it not ſo, think you, with our Maſter in Heaven too? Sure I am St. *Paul* upbraids Men, for not *knowing* i. e. not conſidering, *That the goodneſs of God leads to Repentance; and tells them, who deſpiſe ſuch forbearances and long-ſuffering, that by their hardneſs and impenitent Heart, they treaſure up to themſelves Wrath againſt the day of Wrath; and Revelation of the Righteous Judgment of God; who ſhall render to every Man according to his Deeds.* The longer the Heap is gathering the more it will increaſe, and when they are ripe for Deſtruction, then they ſhall be *paid*; as the Prophet expreſſes it, *Meaſure for Meaſure according to the Multitude of their own Abominations.* Hence, no doubt, God makes uſe of that Expreſſion to *Abraham*, *The Iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.* And our Saviour to the Scribes and Phariſees; *Fill ye up then the Meaſure of your Fathers:* And the Angel to St. *John*, *He that is unjuſt, let him be unjuſt ſtill; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy ſtill; For behold I come, and my Reward is with me, to give every Man according as his Work ſhall be.* By all which we are given to underſtand, that forbearance will not laſt always: that Gentleneſs in this Life is a Preface and Preparation to ſeverity in the next. With regard to which we may very well interpret that of *David*, *The Lord ſhall laugh the Wicked to Scorn, for he hath ſeen that his Day is coming.* Even the dreadful Day of Account, when God ſhall deal with every obdurate Sinner, as he threatens to do with *Jeruſalem*, in Terms that well expreſs the unrelenting Vengeance of that Day: *An End is come, it watcheth for*

Rom. 2. 4, 5.

Gen. 15.

Mat. 23. 32.

Rev. 22. 11, 12.

Pſal. 37.

Ezek. 7. 6, &c.

for thee; behold It Is Come. *I will pour out my Fury, and accompliſh mine Anger upon thee; I will judge thee according to thy Ways, and will recompence thee for all thine Abominations. Mine Eye ſhall not ſpare, neither will I have pity. Deſtruction is come, the Day draweth near, and ye ſhall know, that I am the Lord that ſmiteth.*

Sect. II.

Of the Nature, of the Puniſhment appointed for Wicked Men after this Life:

BY what hath been ſaid of this Puniſhment in general, we cannot but be convinced, how juſtly the Apoſtle obſerves, that it *is a fearful thing to fall into the Hands of the living God.* Heb. 12. But this will be yet much more evident if we proceed in the *Next* place, to conſider, what the Scriptures have diſcovered to us concerning the quality and manner of that Puniſhment, which ſhall be inflicted upon Sinners after their Departure out of this World. And, though no finite Underſtanding is able to concive, much leſs can any Tongue or Pen expreſs, the bitterneſs and extremity of thoſe Torments the Reprobate endure; yet ſhall I endeavour to give ſuch an Account of them at leaſt, as may be of uſe to rouſe the careleſs and ſenſual into ſome Conſideration, for prevention of ſuch inſupportable, ſuch incomprehenſible, Miſery.

Firſt then, For the Place, in which the Damned ſuffer, this is expreſſed and deſcribed in Scripture by ſeveral Names, all denoting Horrour and Miſery. Such as *Hell*, the *Pit*, the *place of Darkneſs*, the *Deep*, the Lake of *God's Wrath*, the *Lake of Fire and Brimſtone*, *utter Darkneſs*. Pſal. 10. Rev. 20. Mat. 22.

And what ſort of Inhabitants it is ſtored with, and what their Employment is, we are told, that they are *the Devil and his Angels*; *Spirits created for Vengeance, which in their Fury lay on ſore Strokes.* But the moſt uſual Title is that of *Gehenna*, or *Hell*, alluding to the *Valley of Hinnom* near *Jeruſalem*; where the Idolatrous Jews formerly ſacrificed their Children to *Moloch*; a place afterwards made a common Dunghil. So that this Word imports the Barbarity of the Tormentors, the miſerable Shrieks, and Cries, and Howlings of the Sufferers, and the loathſom Filthineſs of the place it ſelf; with Regard to this it is called *Tophet*, another Name for that *Valley of Hinnom*, which *Iſaiah* ſays *is ordained of old, made deep and large, the Pile thereof is Fire and much Wood, and the Breath of the Lord, like a ſtream of Brimſtone*, doth kindle it.

Mat. 25. Eccluſ. 39. 28.

Iſa. 30. 28.

Such is the Dungeon of the damned: And for the Pains they undergo, we may obſerve that as Heaven and Hell are contrary, aſſigned to different ſorts of Perſons, and for different Cauſes; ſo are the Properties, and Conditions, and Effects of each, directly contrary. Whatever then is ſpoken in Scripture concerning the Bleſſedneſs of the one, the Reverſe of all that, we may conclude, goes to make up the Calamities of the other. And when St. *Paul* ſaith, that *Eye hath not ſeen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entred into the Heart of man to conceive the Things which God hath prepared for them that love him*; it follows from hence, that neither hath any Heart been able to conceive the things, which God hath decreed to inflict upon them that hate him. And, when the State of the Bleſſed is ſaid to be perfect Felicity, and to want no Ingredient that can be had or deſired, to make Good Men Hap-

1 Cor. 11.

Happy; the Misery of the Damned must likewise be understood to be extreme and absolute, and to want no one Aggravation, which can contribute to make the Wicked perfectly Miserable. This Blessedness and Misery, by consequence, are both infinite, both universal.

And herein is a mighty Difference between the Wretchedness of this, and that of the next Life: that, all Men's Sufferings at present admit of Degrees, and Measure, and extend only to some particular Part or Respect; but there, no Part shall be free, no one Consideration shall be found, in regard of which the Sufferer is exempted. And yet our Pains, though thus limited at present, are sometimes so extreme, that we are not able to support them, and a Man would not be content to endure the Gout, the Stone, nay the Tooth-ach, long together, to gain the greatest Advantage in the World. But suppose now the whole Body at once to be in the utmost Pain, that every Joynt, or Vessel of it is capable of; suppose all this without the least Abatement or Intermission, Who could abide, who can imagin, the lamentabe Condition of that Man? But then consider again what difference there is, between enduring this Torment for a few Days, and to all Eternity; between enduring it, upon a soft Bed, and in a boyling Furnace; between having ones Friends and Comforters about him, and Furies and Enemies torturing and insulting over him: Think of this, Sinner, and if thou wouldst be content to do and suffer a great deal, rather than undergo the less for a little while; be so Wise, so kind to thy self, as to take a little Trouble, rather than smart under the Greater for ever and ever.

It is really Matter of Wonder and Amazement, that God ſhould diſcover ſo many dreadful Circumſtances of this Puniſhment, and yet that ſtupid Men ſhould entertain ſo little Fear of it. The Univerſality and Extremity of theſe Pains are, not only to be inferred from the Reaſons already alledged, but ſufficiently declared in Scripture. There we are told that the Damned ſhall be tortured Day and Night; and
Rev. 20. 10. 18. 7. of *Babylon* it is ſaid, *Give her Torment and Sorrow*: By this manner of Expreſſion is intimated to us, that the Pains of Hell are exerciſed, not, like the Sufferings of this World, for Chaſtiſement and Reformation; but for Affliction and juſt Revenge. And ſince, in ſuch Executions, the Extremity is uſed to bear proportion to the Offence to be made exemplary by it, and to the Power and Dignity of the Perſon offended; Imagin, as well as you are able, the bitterneſs of thoſe Torments, which Almighty God ſhall inflict upon the Reprobate in the next Life, infinite as his own Wiſdom and Power; and unre-
Prov. 1. 24, 26. lenting as the Sinners Heart was formerly. For ſo it is threatned expreſly: *Becauſe I have called, and ye refuſed; I have ſtretched out my Hand, and no Man regarded, I will alſo laugh at your Calamity, and mock when your Fear cometh.*

Beſides theſe Sufferings, Common to all, it hath been an Opinion much received, that there ſhall be particular ſorts of Torments, ſuited to the Quality of each Man's Offence, and this is implyed in thoſe places of Scripture, which ſpeak of God's recompenſing Sinners, *according to the Work of their own Hands*, and *filling them with the fruit of their own Devices*: *As*
Pſal. 28. Prov. 1. Ephr. de ver. Pœnit. cap. 2. *there are different Sins* (ſays an antient Writer) *ſo ſhall there be variety of Puniſhments. The Adulterer*

terer ſhall have one kind of Torment, the Murderer another, the Robber and Extortioner another, the Drunkard another, the Lyer and falſe-ſwearer another. Each that which ſhall be moſt ſenſible and afflicting to him. And then he proceeds; that the Proud Man ſhall be trodden under Foot, the Glutton Gnawed with extreme Hunger; the Drunkard parched up with unquenchable Thirſt; the Voluptuous filled with Gall; the Tender and Delicate ſeared with hot Irons. All which ſome have thought to be denoted in that deſcription of the Wicked Man's Sufferings given at large by *Job*. But certain it is, that the Torments of every Sinner ſhall be extreme beyond all Imagination; and that there ſhall be no poſſibility left of one Moment's Intermiſſion or Comfort. This is ſufficiently declared by that Parable of *Lazarus* and the Rich-man, where not ſo much as one drop of Water, could be obtained to cool his Tongue. Some ſmall Refreſhment it ſeems this would have been to him, could his Requeſt have prevailed for it. But he that before had denyed the Crumbs which fell from his Table, cannot now obtain for even this Drop of Water. He does not preſume to ask a full deliverance, and he cannot be heard for ſo poor a Relaxation.

Chap. 20.

Luk. 16.

Good God! What a ſtrange neceſſity was this Gay Man, who ſo lately had the World at Will, driven to? what a wretched Change is this, from the Jollity and Plenty he had been accuſtomed to, all his Life-long upon Earth? O! that the Men who live in ſinful Wealth, would conſider this Example of God's implacable ſeverity! O! that we would take warning and grow Wiſe, from the Calamities of others, which, if we do not, will certainly be our own, and

are therefore revealed to us, that we may prevent and avoid them.

But if, to all this, we add the Eternity of thoſe Torments. This will increaſe the Miſery beyond all humane Comprehenſion. No Affliction in this World is ſo violent, but that length of time either removes it quite, or in ſome good Degree abates it. Either the Tormentor; or the Perſon tormented dies, or ſome other Accident happens, to break the Force of the Calamity. But here we have no Ground to build ſuch Hope or Comfort upon. The Scripture ſays, *They ſhall be tormented for ever and ever*, that their *Puniſhment muſt be everlaſting*; and, ſo long as God continues to be God, he ſhall continue to hate, and to execute Vengeance upon Sin: Here both the Inflicter, and the Sufferer, muſt live eternally; and the State of the Wicked is therefore called Death, not to denote, that they ſhall ceaſe to be, but that they ſhall be in Miſery, out of which there is no Redemption.

Rev. 20. Mat. 25.

Oh! (ſays a holy Father in one of his Meditations) could but the Damned have aſſurance, that their Torments ſhould laſt no more Thouſand Years, than there are Stars in the Firmament, or Grains of Sand upon the Sea-ſhore, even this, ſo diſtant, proſpect of releaſe would afford ſome conſolation. But this Word *Never* breaks their Heart; As it muſt needs do, to think, that after Millions of Ages they are no nearer to their Journey's End, than when they firſt ſet out. Think but how tedious, how inſupportable one ſingle Hour would be, to be ſtretched upon a Rack, or lie in flames of Fire and ſcalding Brimſtone. We find by Experience, that one reſtleſs Night, to a Man in Sickneſs

neſs or Pain, ſeems a whole Age. He toſſes and turns from ſide to ſide, tells every Clock, and waits for Morning, though upon a ſoft Bed, and with his Friends about him. And, if ſuch a one were ſure, that this uneaſineſs would lie upon him for ſeven Years inceſſantly, the Grief of that Thought were ſcarce to be born. But if one Night in a Fever be ſo grievous, what muſt Millions of Ages be in the Lake of God's Wrath? What that Worm which never dies, and that Fire which is never to be quenched? Continuance renders even the moſt grateful Things troubleoſom and nauſeous, but to continue for ever in unſpeakable Torments! Jeſus deliver us in his great Mercy! how is it to be endured? how is it to be thought of?

To all that went before, I might add another Circumſtance, which the Scripture repreſents the uncomfortableneſs of this Condition by, and that is, the diſmal Darkneſs of thoſe infernal Priſons; than which nothing is more terrible to human Nature. And alſo that, of ſuffering unpitied, which in this World we find by experience to be no ſmall Aggravation to any Adverſity. But theſe, though grievous in themſelves, I rather chooſe but juſt to mention only; becauſe if the Exquiſiteneſs, and the Eternity of thoſe Torments will not deter Men from offending God, and drawing down infinite Miſeries upon themſelves, it is not in reaſon to be expected, that any other Conſiderations relating to them, ſhould have a more ſucceſsful influence.

SECT. III.

The Second Sort of Puniſhment, called that of Loſs.

THE whole account of this everlaſting Miſery hitherto mentioned, ſad as it is, does yet make but a part of the Sinners Puniſhment, diſtinguiſhed by Divines by *Pœna ſenſus*, or thoſe ſenſible Torments inflicted upon Soul and Body in Hell. But beſides this there is another Branch uſually termed the *Penalty of Loſs*, and comprehending all thoſe Advantages, which theſe wretched Men have given out of their Hands, and forever deprived themſelves of. That this Diſtinction is not merely notional, may appear by this plain and familiar Example. When a Perſon of Wealth and Honour falls under the Sentence of the Law for ſome capital Crime, he does not only ſuffer Death, but loſes all he enjoyed; his Eſtate is confiſcated, his Blood is tainted, his Family are ruined. And the Detriment and Diſhonour, which by this Means fall upon his Wife and Children, and Relations; the forfeiture of Goods and Eſtate; the ſtain upon his Reputation, and Honour; the undoing of all his Poſterity; the being cut off in his Youth, and ſnatched away from all his Pleaſures and Enjoyments, is not only a real, but, in the Eſteem of many, a more afflicting Puniſhment, than any bodily Sufferings whatſoever.

And if the Caſe be thus in Temporals, which yet are but mere Trifles, when put into the Balance againſt eternal Loſſes; much more may we conceive it, to aggravate the Puniſhment of the Damned, who are cut off for ever from the ſight,

ſight and fruition, and favour of God, and by that, from the Great the True, the only Happineſs. For God is the ſole Fountain of all Good, and in the Love, and Enjoyment of, and union with him, the very ſubſtance of Man's everlaſting Felicity conſiſts. What a wretchedneſs would it be thought, to loſe in this World all Sight, and Senſe, and Influence, all the cheering Warmth and Vigour, of the Sun; to have all our Organs of Senſe numb'd up, and live under a perpetual Inactivity, frozen up with Cold, and impriſoned in Darkneſs? And yet all this is not the Thouſandth part of what Men ſuffer by the Loſs of God's Preſence, the Father of Lights, the Author and Summ of infinite and everlaſting Glory. All Bliſs and Joy, the Society of Angels, the Praiſes and Triumphs of a heavenly State, the pleaſing Reflections of having done well; In a Word, every Thing that can contribute to make Men Eaſy and Happy is loſt at once; and all the contrary ingredients of Miſery are included under this Particular.

Here lies the true Ground of that horrible Torture, called the *never-dying Worm*, that lies perpetually corroding and devouring the Hearts of the Wicked, thoſe Stings and Agonies of ſad Remorſe, with which their Conſciences are for ever griping and gnawing them. And this ſeems principally to conſiſt in the Remembrance of the Inſtruments and Cauſes of their preſent Calamities. That Negligence, and Folly, and incurable Perverſeneſs, by which theſe Men have loſt that Felicity, which others, under the ſame Diſpenſations, and Means of Grace, have gained and ſecured the poſſeſſion of for ever. And who is able to expreſs that grinding Pain, which ſhall then pierce their very Souls, upon every

every Recollection, what Opportunities were offer'd them, to have eſcaped that dreadful Torment, and to have been as inexpreſſibly Satisfied and Happy, as now they are Miſerable and Diſcontented? How eaſy it once was to have compaſſed this, how often they were convinced, that this ought to be done; how they reſolved to do it, and yet fell back again from thoſe good Reſolutions: How many Warnings they had of their Danger, and yet how little Impreſſion theſe made upon them: How exceeding Vain all thoſe Trifles here below were, upon which they threw away their Time and Pains; How they have ſold their Souls and Heaven for nought; and are come now to feel thoſe inſupportable Miſeries, which they could not be perſwaded to fear: how thoſe whom they thought Fools in this World, are now exalted; and how deſpicably fooliſh thoſe Methods are, which they once miſtook for the only true Wiſdom. Theſe and a thouſand more cutting Reflections will then be laid before them with all their Aggravating Circumſtances, but none more killing than that, of their Condition being paſt all Hope, all Remedy; and that, by coming too late, theſe Convictions come altogether in vain. Yet ſhall this fruitleſs Regret never ceaſe, never intermit; and no one Conſideration ſhall contribute to *their weeping and wailing and gnaſhing of Teeth*, more than this, that they are wretched beyond all Comfort, without all redreſs; that their own careleſſneſs and obſtinacy hath made them ſo; that they cannot help ſeeing this, and yet they cannot ſee, or lament it to any Effect. This Indignation, and Rage, and perpetual fretting ſhall drive them to Deſpair, and rend their Hearts in pieces.

Oh!

Oh! How will theſe Men wiſh, that it were not yet too late to amend! Oh! Had they but another ſhort Life to lead, with what Watchfulneſs and Diligence would they improve every Moment! Oh! Might they but be tryed once more, how faithfully would they ſerve God! But this is not to be done, and even that Blood which ranſomed a whole World, cannot purchaſe one days time, to make a ſecond Experiment, upon thoſe who have abuſed, and were not reformed by the former. 'Tis we alone, my Friends, we, who by the Grace and Long-Suffering of our Good God, are yet alive on this ſide Hell; We have this ineſtimable Benefit of time, for Prevention and Amendment: And would to God we were ſo happy, as to reſolve immediately, and to make the beſt of this day of ours, while it laſts. For alas! It wears away apace, and will quickly be paſt with us too: We ſhall not be able to retrieve one of theſe ſlighted Hours, that now are thought to hang upon our Hands; No, not though we would redeem it at the price of Ten Thouſand Worlds. For all this, no doubt, were it in their Power, the Damned would gladly do; and therefore the true Method of managing this Talent, now it is in our Hands, is ſo to uſe and put it out to Intereſt, that when we ſhall go out of this World, we may have no cauſe to wiſh our ſelves here again, or to curſe the day that ever we came into it at all.

Behold now is the accepted time, behold now is the Day of Salvation. But then it is, *to day, that we muſt not harden our Hearts*, for we know not what may become of us to Morrow. It may be, *To Morrow*, if we defer till then, theſe Hearts may yet be more hard and ſecure, than ever they 2 Cor. 7.

they were heretofore; it may be before *To Morrow*, we may be out of a Condition, and actually in thoſe Miſeries, which to day might be prevented. Had *Pharaoh* followed thoſe relentings cloſe, which the firſt Plagues incited in his Heart, how many dreadful Blows had He, and his People eſcaped? But it was too late to think of retreating, when he was in the midſt of the *Red-Sea*. Had the Rich Man had any Compaſſion, while *Lazarus* lay at his Gate, he had not needed to ask a drop of Water for the cooling of his Tongue; but even this was asked to no purpoſe, when he came to be tormented in that Flame. Then he would fain have obtained a Meſſage from the Dead, to warn his Brethren of their Danger; but he is anſwered, that this was neither neceſſary, nor like to meet with better Succeſs, than the means of Salvation, which were loſt upon them already.

For what indeed can be done more for the reclaiming Wicked Men? What courſe can be taken with thoſe, upon whom neither Exhortation, nor Threatnings, nor Warnings, nor Examples will do any Good? We know, or ought to know, that many have fallen under God's diſpleaſure, who do not appear to have been greater Sinners than our ſelves; We know, nay cannot but know, that we muſt ſhortly die; and, if we commit the ſame Faults with them, ſhall certainly receive the ſame Condemnation. We may be well aſſured, that if we live on ſtill in Wickedneſs, we cannot poſſibly be ſaved; We have ſeen, that the Miſeries of the Wicked hereafter are intolerable, are infinite, are eternal; We cannot but confeſs, that they who for any ſhort Pleaſure or Advantage here, have caſt themſelves into them, are of all Men moſt

Miſe-

Miſerable, becauſe moſt obſtinately Fooliſh. Why then do we not lay aſide every weight, which may hinder us in this Race? Why do we not break looſe from the Snares of this wicked World, and burſt a ſunder all our Chains, by the Force of Godly Reſolution and Zeal? Why ſhould we venture to ſleep one Night more in Sin, ſince that Night may happen to be our laſt, and cut us off from all our Hope for ever?

Sure, if we be wiſe, if we be Men, and pretend to act with Reaſon, we ſhall clear our Souls of theſe Dangers immediately; We ſhall draw near to God, while he is willing to receive us. We ſhall be wrought upon by *Moſes and the Prophets*, by the ſtanding and ordinary Methods of Salvation, as the Rich-Man and his Relations ought to have been, in the time of their Health and Proſperity. Let that Example of his be frequently before our Eyes, that his Torments and fruitleſs Wiſhes may quicken our Holy Reſolutions. God is a wonderful God, in his Patience, and Goodneſs, and infinite Condeſcention; in this Life he courts us, he ſeeks us, he lays himſelf (as it were) at our Feet; and all, to move us to our own Good, to win us, to draw us, to pluck us back from Deſtruction. But after this Life is ended, he will be no leſs wonderful in Juſtice and Vengeance. He then will change his ſtyle, and deal with us after quite another Manner. And oh! the Terrours of that Day, when the meek Lamb of God ſhall turn a fierce and Angry Lion; and our much injured Saviour approve himſelf a juſt and implacable Avenger! And well he may do ſo, after all he hath done in vain on our behalf already. For the Man, who is ſo invited, ſo aſſiſted, ſo forewarned, as every Chriſtian is, or may

may be; He that ſees his Danger plain before his Face, and is not moved to caution by it, may be pitied as a loſt Wretch, but cannot be helped, or kept from being loſt; ſince no remedies can ever do good to thoſe, who will not let them have their proper Operation.

But you will ſay perhaps, "What remedy is "there after all, by which theſe Miſeries may "be avoided? I ſee my own Danger, I believe "the Threatnings of God, and the Teſtimony "of my Conſcience againſt me, makes me trem-"ble at them; but how ſhall I mend the Mat-"ter which I find ſo bad? I anſwer; If what you ſay be true, You are in a very good Way toward it already; for, to believe, and to be afraid of God's Judgments is a fair ſtep towards your Recovery. Theſe are the Groundwork of all Good Motions. Faith lays the Foundation, and Fear will carry it up to Converſion and Amendment. But yet theſe alone are not enough; for the Devils themſelves, St. *James* obſerves, do ſo much: And therefore theſe muſt have other Virtues built upon them ſtill; Hope, and Love, and Repentance for former Faults, Sorrow for the paſt, and ſincere ſtedfaſt Reſolution of living better for the time to come.

This is the true Remedy indeed; A ſovereign Medicine for all our Spiritual Diſeaſes, the only Prevention of all the Miſeries we have been treating of; This diverts the Threatnings of God, pacifies and ſhelters the Sinner from his Wrath; and does in ſome ſort Vanquiſh and Triumph over the Divine Juſtice. For as God never did, nor will, nor can, (according to the Stated-Meaſures of his Dealings with Mankind) forgive any Offender, who does not Repent:

pent: So neither ever did he, or will, or can, deny his Mercy and Pardon to any, who *with true Faith and Hearty Repentance turn to him.* And why then ſhould we not apply this Remedy in its proper Seaſon, and take our Diſtemper in time, before our Symptoms be deſperate? And (as St. *Auguſtine* ſays upon thoſe Words, *Whither ſhall I flee then from thy Preſence?*) Whither can we flee, but to his Goodneſs by Repentance, whoſe Omnipotence we had armed againſt us by Offending: For no Man can flee from him ſucceſsfully but by fleeing to him; from the ſeverity of his Angry Juſtice, to the Sanctuary of his Mercy in Chriſt Jeſus. Were this Cure to be obtained at never ſo great Expence, to be ſought at never ſo great a Diſtance, yet even thus it were our Wiſdom to procure it; much more then, when it is always nigh at Hand, and eaſy to be had.

If a Man under Sentence of Death, and upon the Way to Execution could be put in a Way of delivering himſelf ſo readily, would he be deaf to the Propoſals; Would he ſuffer any other thing to divert him from compaſſing ſuch an eſcape? And yet our Caſe is much more urgent; for temporal Death bears no Proportion to eternal Torments; and an unreformed Sinner is as much in the way to Execution, and (conſidering the uncertainty of Life) may undergo the Law much ſooner, than any Malefactor, condemn'd by an Earthly Judge. What ſtrange ſtupidity is it then to be thoughtleſs and remiſs in ſo important an Affair? Our Lord hath not only provided, not only diſcovered, the Remedy, but hath put it in our own Power; and it depends entirely upon our own Will, whether we will be ſafe by it or not. For what

can

can be more in any Man's Choice, than whether he will diſlike his paſt vicious Courſes, whether he will betake himſelf for Council and Aſſiſtance to the Guides of his Soul, the Miniſters of the Church of Chriſt; whether he will qualify himſelf for having thoſe Sins regularly looſed by theſe Delegates of our Lord upon Earth, which upon theſe Terms will moſt certainly be looſed in Heaven; whether he will have that Pardon ſealed by the bleſſed Sacraments, and ſo teſtify his Union with true Believers, as a Member of his Lord's Myſtical Body. The leaving ſuch Commiſſioners behind him as his Prieſts, ſuch precious and undoubted Pledges of his Love and Reconciliation, as his Bleſſed Body and Blood, are ineſtimable Comforts and Advantages; Such as muſt needs riſe up in Judgment at the laſt Day againſt all them, who neglect or refuſe to make a due uſe of, and take refuge in them, for the preſent Peace and everlaſting Salvation of their Souls, by thus renewing their Covenant with God, and obtaining full remiſſion of their former Sins.

To conclude this Point. Do not ſuppoſe, that being called a Chriſtian will avail in the Day of Diſtreſs, if thou do not live, and act as becomes a Perſon diſtinguiſhed by that Name. If thou haſt fallen into Sins, inconſiſtent with the true import of this Glorious Title, loſe no time but break off from the Bondage of ſuch Vices without delay: Apply the Means of Grace preſcribed here, for theſe are the ordinary Methods of bringing Men to Heaven, and conſequently thou canſt have no Foundation for dependance upon any other. Render thy ſelf capable of Reconciliation by the Sacraments of the Church, and uniting thy ſelf to the Head,

by

by theſe Teſtimonies of thy Union with the Body: And, thus releaſed from the burden of Sin, and ſupported (as thou certainly wilt be) by the inward Conſolations of God's holy Spirit, proceed to the Exerciſe of Good Works, and *bring forth Fruits meet for Repentance.* So ſhalt thou not only avoid the Miſeries of being irreverſibly baniſhed from the preſence of God, and *Suffering the Vengeance of eternal Fire*; but be able with St. *Paul* to look up with a comfortable Aſſurance of that *Crown of Righteouſneſs*, which he declares to have been laid up for him, and for all them that follow the Example of his Converſion and Zealous Piety. Of which Crown, it's Excellency and Glory, I ſhall (as I am able of a Subject ſo far tranſcending the utmoſt human Capacity) ſay ſomething in the following Chapter. 2 Tim. 4. 8.

CHAP. XII.

The noble Rewards of Good Men.

THat nothing might be wanting, on God's part, to perſwade Men to their Duty, he hath made that Duty their Happineſs. And, becauſe there is in Mankind great variety of Tempers, ſome are more effectually moved by one, and ſome by another Paſſion; therefore he hath ſo ordered the matter, that no Conſtitution whatſoever ſhould want Motives ſuited to work upon it. The infinite Benefits we have received from God, might be ſufficient, one would imagin, to lead us to repentance out of meer Gratitude; but every Man hath not a Temper ingenuous

enough to be grateful. The fear of Puniſhment might drive and fright Men into better Manners, but Objects of Terrour Men ſtrive all they can to keep out of their ſight. Our wiſe Maſter hath therefore found another Inducement, which Men ſhould even delight to conſider, and to preſs upon themſelves; One, which meets with a Principle of human Nature, as univerſal, a Spring as ſtrong as even Fear it ſelf, grounded in the natural Love of themſelves, as that is, the Deſire I mean of Advantage and Happineſs. This is the motive, which now remains to be proceeded upon, and I am perfectly content, that all that went before ſhould go for nothing, if I do not make it appear, that this Maſter pays his Servants more liberally than any other; and, that the Gain, accruing from that Service, is greater and more deſirable, than any other Courſe which we can poſſibly take, or think of. And if this Profit can be made out too, then I hope there will be no Difficulty unanſwer'd, which Men in Reaſon can pretend to object, againſt taking up that Holy *Reſolution*, which it is the Deſign of this Book to bring every one of its Readers over to.

Now, As God in all other Reſpects acts agreeably to the Greatneſs of his Majeſty, ſo does he eſpecially in the Inſtances of Bounty and Magnificence. Whatever we do, or can do, in his Service, is in truth, a Debt, and but a poor Tribute, in compariſon of what we owe our Almighty Lord and Creatour. As ſuch, it cannot pretend to any Reward. Yet ſuch is his Munificence, that he ſuffers no Man to ſerve him for Nought; he conſiders the very meaneſt and moſt inſignificant Inſtances of our Obedience and Love, and hath declared, that *even*

a

a Cup of Cold Water given for his ſake, ſhall in no wiſe loſe its reward. Nay, he does not only make Men large amends for what they actually do in regard to him, but he rewards their very Intentions and Good Diſpoſitions to do him Service. He made a Tryal of *Abraham's* Faith, by commanding him to Sacrifice his dear and only Son *Iſaac*; but afterwards he contented himſelf with his readineſs to do it, and would not permit him to do the Thing. And for that readineſs to obey ſo trying a Command, he declares, that in *that Seed of* Abraham, *all the Nations of the Earth ſhould be bleſſed, that he ſhould be multiplied as the Stars of Heaven, and the Sand which is upon the Sea-ſhore for multitude.* When *David* had conſider'd with himſelf the indecency of building himſelf a ſtately Palace, while the Ark of his God was lodged in a mean and moveable Tabernacle, and thereupon reſolved to build him a Temple; Though this Work was, for wiſe Reaſons reſerved for his Son, yet the Will in *David* was taken for the Deed; and recompenſed with a Promiſe of eſtabliſhing an everlaſting Kingdom in his Poſterity: A Promiſe which we ſee now accompliſhed in Chriſt and his Church. That this is the general Method of his Dealings, our Lord himſelf declares, in the Parable of the Labourers in the Vineyard; and in that other Paſſage, *Behold I come, and my reward is with me.* So far is God from ſuffering any Man's Labour to be loſt: And, though he do more than compenſate our utmoſt Pains, by the Bleſſings and manifold Benefits even of this preſent Life; yet is this Payment now in hand, an Earneſt and Pledge only, and ſuch, as comes infinitely ſhort of that moſt liberal Retribution which all his faithful Servants

Mat. 10. 42.

Gen. 22.

2 Sam. 7.

Mat. 20.

Rev. 22.

ſhall receive after this Life, at the *Reſurrection of the Juſt.*

SECT. I.

Of this Reward in general.

THis future Recompence reſerved for Good Men is the Argument of my Diſcourſe in this place. And, in treating of it, I ſhall enquire, what manner of Reward it is, and whether it be large enough to countervail all that Labour and Hardſhip, which the Service of God in this World requires from us. And here, if we attend to thoſe Deſcriptions given of it in Scripture, we ſhall find it repreſented by a *Kingdom*, a *Glorious*, a *Heavenly*, an *Eternal*, and a *moſt Bleſſed Kingdom*. All which Titles are deſigned to denote the marvellous Greatneſs of this Reward. Since in this World no Monarch can be found ſo bountiful to the very beſt of his Servants, as to give him a *Kingdom*, in compenſation of his Service. But if any earthly Prince were both able and diſpoſed to do all this, yet could he not beſtow a *Heavenly*, an *Eternal*, or a *Bleſſed Kingdom*, or one in any Degree comparable to that.

Mat. 25. 2 Tim. 4. 2 Pet. 1. Luk. 14.

Further yet, when St. *Paul* obſerves that *Eye hath not ſeen, nor Ear heard, neither hath it entred into the Heart of Man to conceive the Things, which God hath prepared for them that love him*, this calls upon us to enlarge our Thoughts, and entertain much higher Notions of it ſtill. We may have ſeen many wonderful Things in our own Days: We may have heard of many, more wonderful than we ever ſaw: We may form to our Minds Ideas of Things, far exceeding

1 Cor. 11.

ceeding all we have ever ſeen or heard: But this it ſeems is not poſſible ſo much as to be *Conceived*. How then ſhall we come to underſtand its Value? Chriſt himſelf calls it the *hidden Manna*, Rev. 11. and ſomething which *no Man knoweth but he that receiveth it*. But ſtill, *Expede Herculem*, though we cannot reach its full Proportions, yet ſome Conjecture of it we may make; and by ſuch Draughts in little, raiſe our Affections to the Admiration and Deſire of it; though all the Scripture, or our own Collections, diſcover of it, be much inferiour to, and far diſtant from, the Greatneſs of the Thing it ſelf.

I have already obſerved, that the Terms uſed to expreſs this Matter, import that all who partake of it ſhall be *Kings*, *happy Kings*, moſt *Happy* to all *Eternity*. Which is yet farther confirmed by its being ſtyled, a *Crown of Life*, a *Throne of Glory*, a *Paradiſe*, or a place of Pleaſure, and a *Life everlaſting*. St. *John* for his own and our Inſtruction and Comfort, deſcribes it by the moſt magnificent and beautiful Images, that ſenſible Things can ſuggeſt to us. He compares it to a City whoſe Buildings are of fine Gold, whoſe Walls are of precious Stones; whoſe Light is Chriſt himſelf, in his glorified State, ſitting in the midſt, and ſhedding his bright Beams through every part of it. Whoſe Situation is upon a River of Chryſtal, and upon whoſe Banks grows the Tree of Life, ever flouriſhing, ever bearing Fruit: In which Rev. 21, 22. there is no Night, where no unclean Thing can enter; and they that are thought worthy to be admitted thither, ſhall reign for ever and ever. By all which, we are given to underſtand, that the Majeſty, the Glory, the Excellence of this happy State is infinite; the princely Inheritance

ritance of the Son of God, the Kingdom of his Father, the Habitation of the Bleſſed Trinity, contrived to ſet forth in its full luſtre the Power and Glory of him, whoſe Power and Glory are endleſs and unmeaſurable. And, when God intends to exert this, who can imagine what that declaration will be?

He was pleaſed to create certain Creatures to Miniſter in his preſence, and to behold his Glory; Angels, who are Spirits of an excellent Nature far above our Comprehenſion, and infinite, almoſt, in Number, as well as glorious in Perfection. When ſome of thoſe had fallen, and degenerated from their Native Beauty and Excellence, God condeſcended to frame another Creature, of a far inferiour Condition, to ſupply their Places. His Goodneſs formed Man out of the Duſt of the Earth, and appointed this World to entertain him for a time, during his State of Diſcipline and Tryal. But this Earth God created with an intention to deſtroy it again. And if in the Frame of this periſhing World he have expreſſed ſuch Power and Magnificence; if the Heaven, the Earth, the Seas, and every Element, give ſuch aſtoniſhing Proof of the Creatour's Majeſty; If that which was made in an Inſtant with one ſingle Word, to endure for a little while and only to be ſubſervient, to a future and eternal State, be ſo glorious, ſo wonderful, in all its Parts; What can we ſuppoſe, that Habitation which was prepared for Eternity it ſelf, ſhall be? If the Cottage of his meaneſt Servants, provided to ſhelter and ſuſtain them for a few Days only, be ſo ſtately, what is the King's own Palace, where he and his Friends ſhall reign together for ever? This, we muſt needs imagine, is a Work, the

moſt

moſt glorious, that the Maker's Power and Wiſdom could perform, and the Power and Wiſdom of that Maker, we know, are incomparably above our Comprehenſion, and altogether infinite.

The great King *Ahaſhuerus*, who ruled over a Hundred and ſeven and Twenty Provinces, is ſaid to have made a Feaſt at the Palace of *Suſa*, to all his Princes and Potentates, for a Hundred and Fourſcore Days together. The Prophet tells us, that our Lord and King ſhall make a ſolemn Feaſt to all his People, in his Holy Mountain; And that with ſuch Solemnity, that even the Son of God, and Maſter of the Feaſt, ſhall condeſcend to gird himſelf, and ſerve at it. What manner of Entertainment ſhall this be? A Feaſt, not to laſt for any determinate number of Days, but Millions of Millions of Ages; A Feaſt not ſerved up by Men, but by the Angels, and the very Son of God himſelf; not to diſplay the Riches of a few Provinces, but the endleſs Treaſures of the King of Kings. How glorious, how joyful, how triumphant a Feſtival ſhall that be? How ineſtimable the bleſſedneſs of thoſe Happy Souls, who ſhall then ſit down and Eat Bread in the Kingdom of God? O wretchedly Vain and Stupid Men, who are born to ſo high a Dignity, and yet cannot be prevailed upon, to conſider, and deſire, and eſteem, their Honour and Happineſs!

Eſt. 1.

Iſa. 25. Luke 17.

Several other Conſiderations there be, which might aſſiſt us in forming worthy Ideas of this Reward. If God for Inſtance, have furniſhed us with ſo many Conveniences, and Comforts, and Pleaſures, in this place of our Exile, this Habitation of Sinners, this Vale of Miſery, appointed only for a Seaſon of Repenting, and

Weeping, and Mourning, and Suffering; What will he do for us in the next Life, to the Juſt, to his Friends, in the Day of Joy, and the ſolemnity of the Marriage of his Son? Thus hath St. *Auguſtine* very pathetically proſecuted this Argument, in one of his Soliloquies. "O "my Lord! ſays he, if thou haſt provided ſo "plentifully for this vile Body of ours, and gi- "ven it ſuch Advantages, by the Firmament, "by the Air, by the Earth, by the Sea, by "Light, by Darkneſs, by cheriſhing Heat, by "refreſhing Shades, by Dews, by Showers, by "Winds; by Birds, by Fiſhes, by Beaſts; by "Trees, by manifold Herbs, by variety of Plants, "by the Miniſtry of all thy Creatures; What "manner of Things, Bleſſed God! How Rich, "how Great, how Good, how Innumerable, "are thoſe, which thou haſt prepared for the "Soul in its heavenly Country, where we ſhall "ſee thee Face to Face? If thou do ſo much "for us in our Priſon, what wilt thou do in "our Palace? If thou ſo much beſtow in this "World upon Good and Bad Men promiſcu- "ouſly, O how plentiful is thy Treaſure, which "thou haſt laid up for Good Men in the Life to "come? If thy Enemies and Friends together "enjoy ſo much here below; What ſhall thy "Friends, when ſeparated from thoſe Enemies, "What ſhall they not receive above? If the "Days of Faſting and Mourning have ſuch con- "ſolation, What ſhall be the rejoycing of this "Marriage Feaſt? O my Lord! thou art a great "God, and great is thy Magnificence, and "Sweet is thy Mercy. And, as there is no "end of thy Greatneſs, no number of thy Mer- "cies, no bottom of thy profound Wiſdom, "no meaſure of thy Liberality; ſo neither is "there

Solil. c. 2.

"there any Number, any Meaſure, of the "Depth, and Length, and Greatneſs, and moſt "diffuſive Extent, of thy Rewards laid up for "them, that Love, and Fight for thee.

Another help towards conceiving ſome part of this Reward in the next Life, would be to remember, and diligently conſider the manifold Promiſes of Almighty God, to exalt and dignify all that love and ſerve him. *Them that honour me*, ſays he, *I will honour.* And *David* breaks out into terms of Admiration, as if this could not be particularly expreſt, *Such Honour have all his Saints.* But *David* would have had much greater Reaſon for his Wonder, had he lived under the New Teſtament, and heard that Promiſe of Chriſt, that his Servants ſhould ſit down and Eat, and he himſelf would ſerve them in the Kingdom of his Father; that *they ſhall ſit in Judgment with him, and judge not only Men but even Angels too.* And not only ſo, but this Honour may be in ſome ſort conceived, by that which he ſometimes does to his Servants in this Life, which yet is a State, wherein he places them to meet with Contempt, and not with Honour. How great was the Honour done to *Abraham*, before ſo many Kings, and that to *Moſes* in *Pharaoah's* Court, and that to *Joſuah*, when the Sun and Moon ſtood ſtill at his Command; and that to *Iſaiah*, when the Shadow went back Ten Degrees by his Word, and that to *Elijah*, when the Heavens were opened and ſhut at his Determination? And to *Eliſha*, when he cured a Leproſy by his Word, and raiſed a dead Man to Life, and when his very Bones, long after his Death, wrought the ſame Miracle? And to name no more, to the Apoſtles of our Bleſſed Lord, who heal'd the Infirmities of all

1 Sam. 11.
Pſal. 149.
Luk. 21.
Mat. 19.
Luke 22.
1 Cor. 6.
Gen. 12, 14, 20.
Exod. 5, 6, 7, &c.
Joſua. 10.
Iſa. 38.
2 Kings 18.
2 Kings 5, & 12.
Acts 5.
Acts 19.

all they laid their Hands upon, of all to whom the Handkerchiefs of St. *Paul* were brought, of as many as the Shadow of St. *Peter*, as he pass'd by, fell upon. What Reverence, what Admiration did these holy Patriarchs, and Prophets, and Apostles find, in the presence of *Melchisidech* and *Abimelech*, and *Pharaoh*, and the Armies of *Israel*, and *Hezekiah*, and *Ahab*, and *Naaman*, and the wondering Jews and Gentiles? Could ever any Prince upon Earth boast of such Respects, such Conquests? And, if Christ so eminently distinguished his Servants in this World, of *which* notwithstanding *his Kingdom was not*; what Dignities, what Trophies must we suppose he hath reserved for them in the other World, where his Kingdom is in perfect fulness; and where every Servant of his shall be crowned, as an eternal King to reign in Conjunction with him?

Once more: Some have framed Notions of this incomparable Bliss, from the three different Receptacles, ordained for Man; though it must be allowed, that there is no necessity of any Thing like an exact Proportion between them. The First is our Mother's Womb; The Second this present World; The Third the Regions of Bliss above. Now these, (say they) must so far resemble each other, that the Last should excel the Second, as much as the Second manifestly does the First: Nay as much more, as heavenly and eternal Things exceed the best and greatest of those that are Temporal and Transitory. So that, as much as the whole World is more capacious and delightful, than the Prison which encloses us before our Birth; no less are the Beauty, the Pleasures, the Majesty of our Heavenly Habitation, preferable to those of

our

our present State. As far as a Man exceeds an unborn Child, in Strength, Comelineſs, Underſtanding and all, both natural and acquired, Accompliſhments, ſo much and a great deal more do the Glorified Saints exceed the moſt perfect of mortal Men. And one of theſe would no more be content to return from that bliſsful condition, to the moſt exquiſite Degree of what miſtaken Men call Happineſs here upon Earth; than the beſt of Men would be ſatisfied to be reduced to an Embryo. The few Months in which that Embryo grows to maturity for the Birth, are yet much more conſiderable, when compared with the longeſt Life upon Earth; than that longeſt Life can pretend to be, in compariſon of Eternity. The Blindneſs, the Weakneſs, the Ignorance of that unborn Child, are not ſo much beneath the Vigour, the Knowledge of the ſtouteſt moſt and learned Man, as the Darkneſs, the Folly, and other Calamities of this Life keep us ſhort of that clear Light, and unerring Knowledge, that ſtable and never decaying State, and the other yet unknown Priviledges of the Spirits of Juſt Men made perfect. So that, upon the whole Matter, ſomething we may know concerning this Bliſs; and from theſe, and other ſuch like Conſiderations, ſome general Conjectures may be framed; which though confuſed and dark, are yet ſufficient to raiſe our Notions of, and vehemently to excite our Affections for, that infinite and incomprehenſibly excellent Reward, of which I am now diſcourſing.

SECT.

Sect II.

The felicity of Body and Soul in Heaven.

I ſhall now proceed to conſider this Matter ſomewhat more particularly, under two Heads; as this Reward extendeth it ſelf to the Bodies or to the Souls, of thoſe, who partake of it. And here *firſt* with regard to the Body, I ſhall not follow the ſubtle Notions of nice and fanciful Men, who buſily intrude into Things which they have not ſeen. It is enough for my preſent purpoſe, that the Scripture hath told us, this Fleſh at the general Reſurrection ſhall be changed and glorified; that what, like Seed, is caſt into the Ground, *a Natural*, ſhall come up *a Spiritual Body*; what *is ſown in Weakneſs, ſhall be raiſed in Power*; what *is ſown in Corruption, ſhall be raiſed in Incorruption*; that *this Mortal, ſhall put on Immortality*, that *Chriſt ſhall change our vile Body, and faſhion it according to his glorious Body, according to the mighty Working whereby he is able to ſubdue all Things unto himſelf.* The meaning of all which, to be ſure, amounts to thus much; That this Load of Fleſh, which is now ſo cumberſom, and preſſes down the Mind, ſhall then ceaſe to obſtruct it's nobleſt Operations, or any more to be a Burden to us; That, we ſhall then put off all thoſe Paſſions, which now ruffle and diſcompoſe us, and every ſenſual Appetite, by which at preſent we are tempted to, and inſnared in Sin. That this Mortal, now ſubject to ſo many Inconveniences, liable to ſo many Alterations, afflicted with ſo many Diſeaſes, defiled with ſo many Corruptions, beſet with ſo many Miſeries, ſhall then be placed

1 Cor. 15.

Phil. 3.

ced above the reach of Calamity or Change, Diſtemper or Decay, made as Glorious and Perfect, as the nature of the Thing will admit; and, thus refined and exalted, ſhall endure for ever in moſt exquiſite Beauty and Vigour. And theſe are all ſuch Ornaments and Advantages, as Men would eſteem it a mighty bleſſing to attain to any moderate Proportion of, during their Continuance in this World. And therefore, if we truly love our Bodies, methinks we ſhould ſhew it in being ſollicitous to gain them altogether in the higheſt Degree, in that everlaſting Life which is to come.

But, As great and valuable as this Happineſs is, it is ſcarce worthy to be named with that other Part of our Reward, wherein the Soul is more immediately concerned. Here lies the true Excellence, and the very Eſſence of our Bleſſedneſs. For this Part is properly the Mans, and therefore the chief Good, of which humane Nature is capable, muſt needs conſiſt in the advancing this to its utmoſt poſſible Perfection. And ſuch is the Knowledge and Sight of God, the Summ and Source of all Good. *This* (ſays our Bleſſed Lord) *is Life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt whom thou haſt ſent.* John 17. And St. *Paul, We know in part, and we Propheſy in part; but when that which is perfect is come, that which is in part ſhall be done away. And now we ſee through a Glaſs darkly, but then Face to Face, and ſhall know even as we are known.* 1 Cor. 13. To the ſame purpoſe St. *John* places the Happineſs of the Bleſſed, and the ground of their being drawn into a Reſemblance of the Divine Excellences in this; that then *they ſhall ſee God as he is.* 1 John 3. The Reaſon whereof is, that all the Delights of this World are but very ſmall Particles of

of God's incomprehensible Happiness; the Crumbs, as it were, that fall from his Table; That, as all these are derived from him, so are they united and contained in him, much more eminently and absolutely than they are imparted to any Creature whatsoever: And consequently, the proper Perfections of all Creatures are much more fully in God, than they are, or can be, in those very Creatures, whose Perfections they are.

Now the necessary Consequence of this is; that whosoever is admitted to the Presence and Vision of Almighty God, the Author and Fountain of all Pleasures, must there find all the Goodness of all worldly Things compacted together, and meeting there, as Lines in the common Center, from whence they all are drawn. So that, whatsoever can possibly create true Delight, whether of Body or Mind, here he enjoys the whole with the highest Satisfaction, and most transporting Raptures both of Body and Mind. No Man can imagin, or wish for any Joy, which he shall not find here in its full Perfection. All Knowledge, and Wisdom, and Beauty, and Plenty, and Pleasure, all that can contribute to his Content, all that can attract his Love, or raise his Admiration. There every Faculty of the Mind shall be exercised, its most large and capacious Extent filled, its noblest and most eager Desires gratified; There every Sense shall be most pleasingly entertained. God shall be Light to our Eyes, Musick to our Ears, Honey to our Taste, and Perfume to our Smell, Knowledge to our Understanding, Acquiescence to our Will, and perpetual Presence to our Memory. In him we shall have all the grateful Variety that delights us here, all the Beau-

Beauty that allures us here, all the Pleasure that charms us here. Thus shall He be all in all; the universal Felicity of every Saint, containing, in himself alone, every ingredient of every particular Felicity, without End, or Number, or Measure. "In this Vision of God (says "a Pious Author) we shall Know, we shall "Love, we shall Rejoyce, we shall praise. We "shall see the Mysteries and Judgments of the "Almighty, which are a bottomless Ocean: "The Causes, the Natures, the Beginning, the "End of every Creature. We shall love unmeasureably; God, for the infinite attractives of Love, which we shall discover in "him; our Brethren, as much as our selves, "because we see God love them as much as our "selves, and for the same Reasons, which dispose him to Love us. We shall Rejoyce beyond Measure; for every thing we love in "God will be matter of Joy to us, and these "Motives are infinite; We shall rejoyce in our "Brethren's Happiness, as in our own, and so "shall have as many distinct Causes of Joy, as "we have partakers in our Bliss; and, since "these are infinite, no wonder if our Master "chose to say, *Enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord*, "rather than, *Let thy Lord's Joy enter into thee*; "for no created Heart is large enough to receive the fullness of this Joy. And then we "must needs, if this be our Case, praise God "indefatigably, incessantly; with all our Heart, "and all our Strength, with every Power and "Part capable of it, according to that of the "Psalmist, *Blessed are they who dwell in thy House, "they will be always praising thee.*" Aug. de Anim. 4. cap. 15.

I conclude this Argument, with a Reflection of St. *Austin* to the same purpose. "Our Lord de- Tract. 4. in 1. Ep. Joan. & Soliloq. 36.

"declares the *pure in Heart bleſſed*, upon this
"Account, *that they ſhall ſee God.* From whence
"we may learn that there is a ſight of God,
"capable of making Men happy. A ſight which
"no Eye hath ſeen in this World, nor Heart
"conceived. A Proſpect, far ſurpaſſing the
"Beauty of all Earthly Things, Gold, Silver,
"and precious Stones, Woods, and Fields, and
"Seas; Air and Firmament, Sun and Moon,
"and Stars, and even Angels; for all theſe de-
"rive their Beauty from hence. *We ſhall ſee him*
"*Face to Face*, ſays his Apoſtles, *and we ſhall*
"*know him as we are known.* We ſhall know the
"Power of the Father, the Wiſdom of the Son,
"the Goodneſs of the Holy Goſt; the indivi-
"ſible Nature of the Bleſſed Trinity. Now
"this very *ſeeing the Face of God* is the Joy of
"the Bleſſed Angels; their everlaſting Delight,
"their Crown of Honour, their Aim, and Reſt,
"their inward and outward Conſolation, their
"pleaſurable Paradiſe, their Heavenly *Jeruſa-*
"*lem*, their fulneſs of Bliſs, their eternal Tri-
Phil. 4. 7. "umph, their precious *Peace of God which paſſ-*
"*eth all underſtanding.* This is the complete Be-
"atitude of Glorified Spirits; to behold him
"that made Heaven and Earth, him that Crea-
"ted thee, Redeemed thee, Glorified thee.
"For, in ſeeing him, thou ſhalt know him; in
"knowing him, thou ſhalt love him, in loving
"him, thou ſhalt poſſeſs him, in poſſeſſing him,
"thou ſhalt praiſe him; and in praiſing him
"thou ſhalt employ thy whole Eternity. For
"he is the inheritance of his People, the Feli-
"city of his Choſen, the Reward of their Ex-
"pectation. *I will be thy exceeding great Reward,*
Gen. 15. 1. "ſays he to *Abraham.* O Lord thou art indeed
"exceeding great in thy ſelf, and therefore

"thou

"thou mayst well be thy Servant's exceeding "great Reward. The sight of thee then is all our Wages, all our Recompence, all the Joy and Felicity we can hope or have; for thou thy self hast said it, *This is Life Eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.* Joh. 17. 3.

SECT. III.

Some Circumstances increasing the Joys of Heaven.

HAving thus observed, wherein our Happiness hereafter, as it relates to each part of us, does strictly and properly consist; it cannot sure be hard to conceive, that the Joy resulting from hence must needs be exceeding great, in that blessed Day when we shall be translated thither. Let us hear St. *Augustine* once more breathing out his Sense of it in those most affectionate Expressions. "O Joy, above all Joys, and without "which there is no Joy! When shall I enter in- "to thee? When shall I possess thee, to see my "God, that dwelleth in thee? O everlasting "Kingdom! O Light Eternal! *O Peace of God,* "*which passeth all Understanding! wherein the Souls* "*of Saints do rest with thee, O Lord; where everlast-* "*ing gladness is upon their Heads, and Sorrow and* "*Pain are fled far from them!* How glorious a "Kingdom is thine, my God and Saviour, where "every Servant of thine sits in State with thee, "decked with Light as with a Garment, and "crowned with Bliss as with precious Stones! "where thou thy self art present, the Hope of the "faithful, the Diadem of their everlasting Glo- "ry, filling every Sense with ravishing Comforts "by thy blessed Sight. In this Kingdom of thine, Aug. Soliloq. c. 35.

"deareſt Lord, is Mirth without Sadneſs; "Health without Sickneſs, Life without La- "bour, Light without Darkneſs, Happineſs "without Abatement, Goodneſs without Evil, "Youth that never waxeth old, Strength that "never decayeth, Beauty that never fadeth, "Love that never cooleth, Joy that never ceaſ- "eth. Here Pain is never felt, Complaint ne- "ver heard, matter of Grief never ſeen, Diſ- "aſters and Diſappointments never feared. And "all, becauſe they have the fruition of thee O "Lord, who art the Fulneſs and Perfection of "all Felicity! Would we, who live in theſe Days, and read theſe zealous Meditations, employ our Thoughts as this holy Man did, we ſhould no doubt feel our ſelves more inflamed with ardent Love, and impatient Deſires, of this heavenly Bliſs; We ſhould contend more earneſtly for the obtaining it, than now, alas! we do.

Now for the kindling theſe Affections in our Souls, and quickning them up to ſome better Senſe of this Matter; let us conſider a little, how joyful a Day that will be with us, when, after having finiſhed our Courſe, and paſſed the time of our Sojourning here in the fear of God, Death ſhall tranſlate us from Miſery and Labour to Life and Immortality; when, at that Hour, which others tremble at the very Thought of, we ſhall lift up our Heads in hope, becauſe the *time of our Redemption draweth nigh:* When the Priſon-doors ſhall be opened, and the Soul, ſhall March out in Triumph, conducted by the bleſſed Angels, to its Father's Manſions, and received there by all thoſe Orders of the Heavenly Hierarchy mentioned in Scripture. All theſe rejoyced at our converſion, and all ſhall aſſiſt with

Luke 21.

with Gladneſs at our Coronation. O! what a Day of Jubilee will that be to us, when we ſhall be preſented in full Court before the Throne of the moſt High, with a recital of the Good we have cherfully done, and the Evils we have patiently ſuffer'd, for the Love and Service of Almighty God: When all our Virtuous Actions, all our Almes and Prayers, all our Watchings and Faſtings, all our holy Labours for the Good of others, all our Patience and Charity in bearing and forgiving Injuries and Affronts, our conſtancy in Adverſity, our Moderation in Proſperity, our Sobriety and Temperance, our Innocence and Purity, all ſhall be remembred, commended, rewarded; and not one Circumſtance forgotten, which may tend to our Advantage! Shall we not then, think you, be convinced of the Wiſdom of Godlineſs? that this is the great, the only true Gain? Shall we not then, ten Thouſand times over, bleſs that happy Hour, when we reſolved to break looſe from the miſerable Bondage of Sin, and the World, and bound our ſelves to that Service, which is perfect Freedom? Shall we not then think our ſelves moſt highly obliged by them, who ſhewed us the Errour of our Ways, and be thankful for thoſe Admonitions, Reproofs, or Corrections, which brought us firſt to make that Reſolution? Yes doubtleſs, Then we ſhall value the Miniſters of God as they deſerve, and be convinced, that they only were our true Friends, who would not flatter us in our Follies; and, that the Impatience and Uneaſineſs, which any Good Offices done to our ſelves were formerly entertain'd with, proceeded from our blindneſs and inſenſibility of our true Happineſs: And that none ever loved us ſo

well, as they, who rather than ſee us periſh everlaſtingly, would venture to diſpleaſe us, by bold but neceſſary Truths. But farther yet,

When we ſhall look behind us, and reflect, what a ſecure Haven we have at laſt put into; how many Storms and Dangers we have paſſed, in which others are ſtill toſſing, and in hazard of their Safety; our Satisfaction muſt needs receive great encreaſe by this comfortable Thought. Then ſhall we clearly diſcern the infinite Snares and Precipices we have got over; and how often we ſhould certainly have periſhed in our Paſſage, had not the Hand of God ſuſtain'd our Weakneſs, and reſcued us from thoſe Difficulties, which we were not of our ſelves a Match for. Then ſhall we ſee the doubtful Conflicts of them, who ſtill ſurvive the Death and Damnation, which many of our Friends and Acquaintance have plunged themſelves into, the Howlings, and bitter Pains which they now lie in, whoſe Wit and Humour uſed once to make their company Merry. All which, compared with our own better Lot, ſhall raiſe our Senſe and Value of it. Then, my Son for thy own part, thou mayeſt reſt ſecure. There is no more need then of Fear, or Labour, or Care: No occaſion for ſleeping in Arms, but theſe may all be laid aſide as uſeleſs; ſince thou haſt no more Enemies to aſſault thee, no more crafty Serpent to beguile thee, no more treacherous Heart to betray thee, but all is Safety, Peace and Pleaſure: Mortification and Abſtinence, and chaſtiſing thy Body, and ſtruggling with Difficulties, and Temptations, ſubduing of Paſſions, and conflicting with fleſhly and ſenſual Appetites, have now had their perfect Work. There is a nobler and more delightful

Ex-

Exerciſe prepared to ſucceed in their ſtead. Rejoycing and Triumphing, and ſinging *Halle-lujahs* to that Lamb, who ſhed his Blood to bring thee to this Bleſſedneſs, and will preſerve thee in it to all Eternity.

Again, Think what tranſporting Comfort it will be, at that Day, to behold that holy Lamb, ſitting in Majeſty upon his Royal Throne. If the Three Wiſemen came ſo far out of the Eaſt, and rejoyced exceedingly to ſee a ſpeechleſs Infant, lying in a Manger, what a Satisfaction will it be to ſee this once Weak and Poor, this deſpiſed and crucified Jeſus, triumphant over His, and Our Spiritual Enemies! If St. *John Baptiſt* leaped in his Mother's Womb, when this yet unborn Child approached him, what Raptures ſhall his glorious preſence excite in his eternal Kingdom?" This (ſays St. *Auguſtin*) "is the top of all that Happineſs enjoyed by the "Saints in Heaven, to be admitted to the ſight "of Chriſt in his Glory, and to receive the "Beams of Glory ſhed abroad by the Splendor "of his Majeſty. And, if we were to be af-"flicted every Day; nay to undergo the very "Torments of Hell for a Seaſon, thus to be "numbred among the Saints in Glory everlaſt-"ing; thus to gain the Sight of, and be ſuffer-"ed to approach our Lord in Heaven, were a "Reward ſo valuable, that even thoſe Pains "are to be eſteemed as nothing in compariſon "of it. O! that we made the ſame juſt account of this Bleſſedneſs! for there only wants a true eſtimate of our Priviledges hereafter, to prevent Men's living as they now do, and loſing thoſe ineſtimable Advantages, for ſuch wretched Trifles in Exchange, as the Children of this World are ſottiſhly content to barter them away for. Serm. 27. de Sanct.

But ſtill I have not done (and indeed in this Argument it is not eaſy to make an end): Imagin then once more, what a Pleaſure it ſhall be at that Day, to meet with all thy old Friends, who are received into that bleſſed Peace: Thy Father, thy Mother, thy Husband or Wife, thy Brothers and Siſters, thy Kindred, and Neighbours, thy intimate Acquaintance, and moſt beloved Companions: O! the Mirth, the mutual Welcomes, the ſweet Embraces, that ſhall be there upon this Occaſion! All which St. *Cyprian* hath very piouſly expreſt? "Who is "there (ſays he) that after a long and perilous Voyage, is not tranſported, with the very Thought of returning to his own Country "and old Friends? Now Heaven (my Chriſtian "Brethen) is our own Country; and the Inhabitants of that bleſſed Place, are our Friends "and Relations: How comes it then to paſs, that "we are not more eager to meet and Embrace "them? In Heaven we have Parents, and Children, and Kinſmen, without number, at diſtant Removes, thoſe that have ſprung from us, "and thoſe from whom we have ſprung, whom "here we never knew: There we may have "many Acquaintance and dear Friends, wiſhing "and waiting for our ſafe Arrival. What a "Satisfaction will it be to them and us, to meet, "and embrace, and ſolace our ſelves together? "How incomparably ſweet will the Delight be, "to have met once again, never to part any "more? to enjoy each other, and Love and "Reign together, where Eternity of Life ſhall "receive no allay from any fear of Death. This Satisfaction too, great as it is, ſhall yet be continually increaſed, by the daily freſh Arrival of new Kindred and Friends, bringing along with them

them the Spoils of their Enemies vanquiſhed in their Conflicts, during this mortal Life: And what a comfortable Sight will it be to ſee thoſe Seats of fallen Angels ſupplied with new Recruits of Men; to obſerve the Crowns of Glory upon their Heads, in a beautiful Variety, proportionable to the Quality of their Combats and their Conqueſts? Some for Martyrdom and Conſtancy under Perſecution, others for Mortification and Chaſtity, others for Poverty and Patience, others for Humility and Meekneſs; All, according to the different ſorts of Victory, obtained by them in the Fleſh. And among all other Subjects of rejoycing, that ſure, where Charity and Good-nature are in their utmoſt Perfection, cannot be the leaſt; To ſee the Raptures, the Aſtoniſhment of thoſe who are tranſlated thither from the Miſeries of this wretched Life; how they exult, and are even loſt in Admiration, at the happy Change, and exceeding great Honour, conferred upon them.

Let us ſuppoſe a poor Traveller, who had loſt his Way, wandering in a deep miry Bog, in a dark tempeſtuous Night, far from Shelter, terrified with Thunder and Lightning, wet to the Skin, benumb'd with Cold, deſtitute of Money, ſpent with Toils, famiſh'd with Hunger, burnt up with Thirſt, driven to Deſpair with the foreſt complication of Miſeries, that can poſſibly meet together: Let us, I ſay, ſuppoſe this weary, deſolate, deſpairing Man, brought in the twinkling of an Eye, to a ſtately Palace, where every thing is provided, that can Refreſh or Delight him. All this prepared for his Entertainment, and only waiting for his Coming, the Servants and Courtiers in readineſs

But ſtill I have not done (and indeed in this Argument it is not eaſy to make an end): Imagin then once more, what a Pleaſure it ſhall be at that Day, to meet with all thy old Friends, who are received into that bleſſed Peace: Thy Father, thy Mother, thy Husband or Wife, thy Brothers and Siſters, thy Kindred, and Neighbours, thy intimate Acquaintance, and moſt beloved Companions: O! the Mirth, the mutual Welcomes, the ſweet Embraces, that ſhall be there upon this Occaſion! All which St. *Cyprian* hath very piouſly expreſt? "Who is "there (ſays he) that after a long and perilous Voyage is not tranſported, with the very Thought of returning to his own Country "and old Friends? Now Heaven (my Chriſtian "Brethen) is our own Country; and the Inhabitants of that bleſſed Place, are our Friends "and Relations: How comes it then to paſs, that "we are not more eager to meet and Embrace "them? In Heaven we have Parents, and Children, and Kinſmen, without number, at diſtant Removes, thoſe that have ſprung from us, "and thoſe from whom we have ſprung, whom "here we never knew: There we may have "many Acquaintance and dear Friends, wiſhing "and waiting for our ſafe Arrival. What a "Satisfaction will it be to them and us, to meet, "and embrace, and ſolace our ſelves together? "How incomparably ſweet will the Delight be, "to have met once again, never to part any "more? to enjoy each other, and Love and "Reign together, where Eternity of Life ſhall "receive no allay from any fear of Death. This Satisfaction too, great as it is, ſhall yet be continually increaſed, by the daily freſh Arrival of new Kindred and Friends, bringing along with them

them the Spoils of their Enemies vanquished in their Conflicts, during this mortal Life: And what a comfortable Sight will it be to see those Seats of fallen Angels supplied with new Recruits of Men; to observe the Crowns of Glory upon their Heads, in a beautiful Variety, proportionable to the Quality of their Combats and their Conquests? Some for Martyrdom and Constancy under Persecution, others for Mortification and Chastity, others for Poverty and Patience, others for Humility and Meekness; All, according to the different sorts of Victory, obtained by them in the Flesh. And among all other Subjects of rejoycing, that sure, where Charity and Good-nature are in their utmost Perfection, cannot be the least; To see the Raptures, the Astonishment of those who are translated thither from the Miseries of this wretched Life; how they exult, and are even lost in Admiration, at the happy Change, and exceeding great Honour, conferred upon them.

Let us suppose a poor Traveller, who had lost his Way, wandering in a deep miry Bog, in a dark tempestuous Night, far from Shelter, terrified with Thunder and Lightning, wet to the Skin, benumb'd with Cold, destitute of Money, spent with Toils, famish'd with Hunger, burnt up with Thirst, driven to Despair with the forest complication of Miseries, that can possibly meet together: Let us, I say, suppose this weary, desolate, despairing Man, brought in the twinkling of an Eye, to a stately Palace, where every thing is provided, that can Refresh or Delight him. All this prepared for his Entertainment, and only waiting for his Coming, the Servants and Courtiers in readiness

to receive and bid him welcome, to Serve and Honour him, nay to Crown him a King; What ſort of Behaviour, what Affections, what inexpreſſible change of Temper muſt this ſurpriſing Alteration create? What could he ſay? or rather, Could he ſay any Thing? Would not excels of Joy ſtrike him Dumb, and his Heart expand it ſelf, even till it burſt, with the greatneſs of a Pleaſure, too ſtrong and great to be obtained. Now all this, and much more, will be the Caſe of thoſe happy Souls, who, from the Troubles of this Life, make their eſcape to Heaven. No Refreſhment, no ſatisfaction of Senſe is able to give us any tolerable Idea of it. But, O! that we would labour to conceive as much of it as we may; that we would ſtrike the Impreſſion deep upon our Hearts, to draw us off from the empty Bubbles of this World, and engage our Affections to the ſubſtantial Happineſs of the next! Had we but a worthy Opinion of this Reward, we could not be ſo cold in our Purſuits of it. Were we ſuch wiſe Merchants, as the Saints of old, we ſhould bid as boldly for this Pearl of great Price, as they did. We ſhould, after our great Leader's Example, *endure the Croſs for the Joy that is ſet before us*; and, in obedience to his Advice, *Go and ſell all we have, and buy this hidden Treaſure.* We ſhould with St. *Paul*, *count all but Droſs and Dung ſo we may win Chriſt*: and cry out with *Ignatius*, *Fire, Gibbets, Wild Beaſts, breaking my Bones, cutting my Body to Pieces, all the Torments, that the Malice of Men or Devils can inflict, are welcome, ſo I may, by their Means, attain to the Kingdom of Heaven.* Bleſſed God! How different Notions had theſe Saints from ours? Who can think it ſtrange after this, that the Friendſhip of this World

Mat. 13.

Hieron. in Catal.

World should be enmity with God, and the Wisdom of God reputed Foolishness by the World? Oh wretched Men, how long will ye love Vanity, and follow after Deceit! Why do you refuse and despise Gold, and at the same time toil for Chaff and Straw? Chaff and Straw indeed, such as is not only vile in it self, but will at last set your Houses on Fire, and prove your irreparable, your eternal, Undoing.

Sect. IV.

Of the Christian's Title to this Reward.

IT only now remains, that I exhort every Christian to consider, what he is born to, and may certainly attain, provided he be not wanting to himself. By virtue then of his Second and Spiritual Birth, he is Heir apparent to the Kingdom of Heaven, a Kingdom Infinite, Blissful, and Eternal; the Kingdom of Almighty God himself. He is made a Joynt-Heir with *Jesus Christ* the Son of God, to reign, and triumph, and sit in Judgment with him; And could he be more, except it were to be made God himself? All the Riches and Glory that Heaven contains, shall be bestowed to make him happy. And who would not value this Inheritance? Who would not be at some Pains to gain it? especially when assured, that our Labour shall not be in vain in the Lord; but even the meanest and most miserable Man upon Earth, may, if he please exalt himself to this royal Dignity? Why then should we slight our own Mercy and Happiness? Why should we not make this wise Bargain, when dealing with one who neither will, nor can, deceive us? No-

Nothing can be a greater Grief to him that dyed for us, than that we ſhould not reap the Benefits of his death: Nothing more ungrateful to him who offers ſo vaſt a Treaſure at ſo reaſonable a Price, than that we ſhould purchaſe the pains of Hell, at a greater Expence, than Heaven and eternal Joys with good Management would coſt us. O Incredible Liberality in the kind Offerer! O moſt unaccountable Madneſs and Folly in the obſtinate Refuſer!

Follow not then the Frenzy and dotage of worldly Wiſdom, nor partake with the Wicked in this fatal Errour. For the Day will come when they ſhall dearly repent, and ſmart for their perverſeneſs; and thou ſhalt eſteem thy ſelf moſt happy in diſſenting from them. Let them ſquander away their precious time in Vanities, the ſinful and fugitive Delights of this periſhing Life; let them build ſtately Palaces, aſpire greedily after Honours; lay Field to Field, and heap up thick Clay; This is all but building Caſtles in the Air, and their ſhort, falſe appearances of Happineſs are not worth thy Envy. If they diſparage the Riches of God, and the Honour of his Saints at preſent, and cannot entertain any lofty Ideas of that Happineſs, in which carnal Pleaſures have no part, marvel not at the matter; for theſe Things are not of a ſize with their Capacities, nor ſuited to their depraved Affections. A Horſe can have no Notion of any Entertainment above Provender and Water; and the ſenſual Man, who, in this reſpect hath degenerated into Brute, can as little underſtand the Things that be of God. But thou haſt been taught to raiſe thy Thoughts up to loftier Matters, and the only Qualification, farther needful, is to endeavour after them.

For

For it must always be remembred, that this Kingdom of God is never to be found of them that seek it not. It is the Prize at the Goal; but the Prize is only for them that run. It is the Crown of Glory, but none can be crowned, except such as fight. Observe the Condition proposed by the Master of the Combat, *Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that doeth the Will of my Father which is in Heaven.* This Kingdom is offered to all, but they who are content to suffer with Christ are the Persons that shall reign with him. Consider then the greatness of this Treasure, but consider it so, as not to mistake the Methods of obtaining it; and this can only be by a Virtuous and Godly Life. Sit down then, and, according to our Lord's Advice compute the Cost, whether thou have the Heart, and the Purse, to buy this Pearl of great Price; whether Strength sufficient to engage in this War or no. My meaning is, Whether thou art stedfastly resolved, and fully determined, to get Heaven at any rate, and think it a Good Bargain upon the Terms of forsaking all Sin, and leading a godly, righteous and sober Life in this present World. This is the single Point upon which thy Success will turn at last. And all the former Chapters, are intended for this very Purpose, that thou shouldst take right Measures, answer the end of thy Creation, and firmly set thy self not to lose that by Negligence, which can never be retrieved, and which, if thou do lose, Ten Thousand times better were it for thee that thou hadst never been Born.

Mat. 7.21. 2 Tim. 11.

If then the Love of God, if the Love of thy Self, have any Power, to influence thy Will, shake

ſhake off that dangerous Security, with which Fleſh and Blood ſo frequently ſtupifies Worldly and ſenſual Minds. Have regard to thy future and everlaſting State, and whatever becomes of this Tranſitory one, reſolve to ſecure that. Conſider, that Eternity depends on this ſhort Moment; and if our Life be but a Moment, and yet a Moment of ſuch vaſt Importance, think what a madneſs it is, to trifle it away in an unthinking careleſs way of Living. Thou canſt not want Remembrancers of thy Duty. All the Creatures of Earth, and Heaven, and Hell, are Motives, are Books, are Sermons and Exhortations to thee, ſome by their Glory, ſome by their Puniſhment, ſome by their Beauty, all by their Creation; they loudly and with one Voice declare, that thou wert not ſent into the World for nothing; that thou art bound to do the Works of him that ſent thee; that all is Vanity, and Folly, and Miſery, except only the Service of thy Lord and Maſter. And with this Admonition, I will conclude this Firſt Part of my Treatiſe; reſerving for the Second, my Anſwers to ſome Objections and Impediments, uſually alledged in Bar to this Holy *Reſolution*. In the mean while, I moſt heartily beſeech our Lord and Saviour Jeſus Chriſt, who did not diſdain to ſhed his own moſt precious Blood for the purchaſing this Inheritance and Kingdom for us; that he would be pleaſed to give us his Grace, that ſo we may value it as it deſerves, and labour for it ſo zealouſly, ſo ſucceſsfully, that the Obſervation of the Wiſeman be not laid to our Charge at the laſt Day, nor we reproached with having *ſo noble a Price put into the Hands of Fools in vain, ſeeing we had not the Heart to uſe it.*

Prov. 17. 16.

A

A

TREATISE

Concerning

Holy Resolution.

PART II.

Introduction.

IN the former Part of this Book, I have propos'd to my Reader several mighty Considerations, in order to excite in him a firm Resolution of serving God. And, in regard that very Service is perfect Freedom, and the very nature of Virtue, such as attracts the Love and Admiration of reasonable and unprejudic'd Minds, I might hope, that this, back'd with the Inducements already mentioned, would be sufficient, effectually to win Men to Goodness; were it not, that we have a subtle and dangerous Enemy to deal with. One, who, even after our Judgments are convinced, does not give up the Cause, but finds Means oftentimes to seduce our Wills, and hinder our choosing those Methods, which yet we are very sensible are fittest to be taken. Thus, when the Excellency of heavenly and spiritual Wisdom shines in upon our Understandings in its brightest lustre, and discovers the Vanities of a Sinful, and

and the Advantages of a Godly Life: This cunning Adversary dissuades such a Change, either by representing the difficulty of obtaining Pardon for our past Sins; or by magnifying the hardships of Virtue and Piety; or by affrighting us with the loss of the Pleasures and Advantages of this present Life; Or by some other trifling Delusion; which though of no real Weight in it self, yet, falling in with the Inclinations and Infirmities of our present State, seems in the partial Eye of Flesh and Blood, to carry a great deal in it. Thus he labours either wholly to divert, and drive us from our good Resolution, or else to keep it off and hold us in suspence, and either way, if he succeed, his purpose of ruining us takes effect. Now, For the better preventing these subtle and malicious Attempts, my Design is, in the following Chapters, to consider the principal Hindrances, which use to keep Men off from this necessary Undertaking; and I hope so to detect the Sophistry of those vain pretences, as to bring Men to a right Sense of their own Condition, and to arm them against the treacherous Insinuations of their Spiritual Adversary. For I am much inclined to promise my self, that the Matters treated of here, may with careful Perusal, and sincere Application, contribute greatly to the Profit and Satisfaction of my Readers, and both confirm and comfort them in their Good Intentions of advancing and persevering to the End, in those Ways, which the former Part, I would fain presume, hath satisfied them, are undoubtedly the right, the only, Paths to Happiness.

CHAP.

CHAP. I.

Of the First Obstruction to Holy Resolution. Distrust of God's Mercy upon the account of the Greatness, or Number, of our Sins.

AS One of the most powerful Seducements to Sin, is presuming upon Mercy and Pardon, so one of the most dangerous Temptations to continuing in a sinful Course, is a distrust of God's Mercy, and despair of that Pardon. A most uncomfortable State of Mind, to which the Devil labours to drive Men, when their Consciences reproach them, and they feel a dead weight of Guilt lie heavy upon their Minds. Such was the Case of *Cain*, who, upon the Murder of his Brother, and a Sense of that Vengeance, for which that Blood cryed loud against him, broke out into that horrid complaint *my Iniquity is greater than can be forgiven.* Such that of *Judas*, who, declaring his Sin in betraying his innocent Master, found no other course of redressing the Misery he lay under, than that of destroying himself for Grief. A Refuge more displeasing, more injurious, to that merciful Saviour he had betrayed, than even that Treachery was, which delivered him up into the Hands of those Enemies, who sought his Life. Upon this Rock sometimes God suffers wicked Souls to suffer Shipwrack; and leaves them to all the Terrours of his Threatnings, and their own Wickedness: So in his just Judgment punishing one Sin with another.

Gen. 4. Mat. 27.

And

And wretched indeed is the Condition of such hardned Wretches; for this Despair plunges them into all manner of Evil; it stops the Influences of Divine Grace, and cuts in sunder those Cords of Love, by which God draws Men to himself; It represents Repentance and Amendment, as remedies that come too late, and cannot be applyed with any Effect, and abandons the Sinner to the commission of all Uncleanness with Greediness.

Now nothing can be a higher Provocation, than to offend upon this Principle, because it robs God of that beloved Attribute, in which he principally delights; his boundless Mercy and Goodness; It represents him to be a Powerful Being, but withal Implacable and Fierce; such as takes pleasure in the Destruction of his Creatures, and is not to be appeased with any, though never so sincere and deep, Sorrow for Offences passed. It were easy to shew the ill Consequences of this Disposition, and how heinously God resents it, how solemnly he disclaims the Ground on which it proceeds, from sundry passages of Holy Writ. But, at present, I shall content my self with Instancing in Two only.

The First is, That of *Jeremiah*, not long before the *Babylonish* Captivity, when the People, terrified with their own grievous Sins, and the dreadful Punishments denounced against them, resolved not to quit their former Abominations, upon this impious Thought, that Reformation could be no Advantage to them. *They said, There is no hope, but we will walk after our own Devices, and we will every one do the Imagination of his Evil Heart.* Whereupon God upbraids them with a Degree of Impiety, worse than even the

Jer. 18.

Pa-

Pagan World had been guilty of. *Ask ye now among the Heathen, who hath heard ſuch Things?* And for their better Information in this Matter, he explains to them the Nature of his Proceedings, and the true Importance of his Threatnings, by the Parable of a Potter framing a Veſſel that had been ſpoiled under his Hands, into another Veſſel, according as the Stuff would bear, and his own Prudence directed. The Application of which Parable there, is as follows. *O Houſe of* Iſrael! *Cannot I do with you as this Potter?* ſaith the Lord; that is, keep you from being utterly loſt and of no uſe at all? *Behold! as the Clay is in the Potter's Hand, ſo are ye in my Hand, O Houſe of* Iſrael. *At what time I ſhall ſpeak concerning a Nation, and concerning a Kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to deſtroy it; If that Nation, againſt whom I have pronounced, turn from their Evil; I will repent of the Evil that I thought to do unto them.* And then, in the following parts of that Chapter, he expreſſes his juſt Indignation againſt ſuch unreaſonable Men, as look upon their Caſe to be paſt remedy; and ſuppoſe the Threatnings iſſued out on purpoſe to drive them to Amendment, impoſſible to be eſcaped, even though they ſhould amend; and imagin the God and Creatour of Men, a Being never to be appeaſed, and a Hater of the Work of his own Hands.

The Second Inſtance is of the ſame People again, at another time, and under the Inſtruction of another Prophet. They languiſhed under their Afflictions, during the time of their Exile, and laboured under ſad Apprehenſions of more and greater Miſeries, which diſcouraged them from a Change of their former wicked Courſes. *Thus they ſpoke, ſaying, If our Tranſgreſſions and* Ezek. 33. 11, 12.

our Sins be upon us, and we pine away in them, how then should we live? For the taking off this Objection, God sends the Prophet *Ezekiel* to them, with this supporting Message: *As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the Wicked, but that the Wicked turn from his way and live; turn ye, turn ye from your evil Ways, for why will ye die, O House of* Israel? *When I say unto the Wicked, thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his Sin,* V. 14, 16. *and do that which is lawful and right: None of his Sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned against him; he hath done that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live.* Now, though this might suffice to remove this *first* Obstruction, by proving, that, even the most express Sentence of Death and Damnation shall not take place against those, who improve the Consideration of their Danger, into an Occasion of serious and effectual Reformation of Manners; and consequently that none have Reason to distrust of Mercy, but they only who will not qualify themselves for it by amendment of Life: Yet, for the clearer Evidence of this Matter, and the greater Comfort of those, who are oppressed with the heavy Burden of their Sins; I shall choose to enlarge a little upon this Subject, and shew, that no Time, no State, no Age, no degree of Guilt, is excluded from the Mercy of God, provided Men do truly and in good earnest Repent. That, consequently all, without exception, may apply to themselves that promise, *Turn ye, and ye shall live.* And this is what I hope to make good in the following Particulars.

Sect. I.

The Nature of God's Love to Mankind.

First then, we may form to our ſelves a juſt Idea of this Mercy and readineſs to forgive, by the incomprehenſible Love of God to Mankind. For, Love will always diſpoſe the Perſon affected with it, to ſpare and pardon the Faults and Failings of the Party beloved, in proportion as he is dear to the Perſon ſo offended. What this Love of God is in it ſelf, we are not indeed able to conceive, but we may reaſonably conjecture the Greatneſs of the Cauſe, from the Greatneſs of it's Effects; and judge of the Depth of the Fountain, by the Streams which we ſee flow from it. Now the proper effects of Love are Good Offices and Acts of Kindneſs and Compaſſion, and what ineſtimable, what infinite Demonſtrations of this kind God hath been pleaſed to give us, hath been alredy declared at large. The whole Frame of the World and all his Proceedings with Man, are ſo many undeniable Evidences of it. And therefore where the Rivers are ſo deep, and wide, it muſt needs follow, that the Spring from whence, they take their riſe, is inexhauſtible, unmeaſurable, and far ſurpaſſing the compaſs of any humane, or finite, Underſtanding.

If it be enquired, what ſhould move Almighty God to be ſo very kindly affected towards Man, I own my ſelf incapable of giving any ſufficient account of it on our Part, and rather chooſe, with Holy Men in Scripture, to ſtand amazed at the Marvellous Condeſcention. The more we reflect upon his Majeſty, and our

own Vileneſs, the greater ſtill muſt needs be our Wonder and Aſtoniſhment. But yet ſome Light into this Matter is given us by Wiſe and Good Men. *Thou loveſt all the Things that are*, ſays *Solomon*, *and abhorreſt nothing, which thou haſt made; for never wouldſt thou have made any Thing if thou hadſt hated it. Therefore thou ſpareſt all, becauſe they are thine, O Lord thou Lover of Souls.* And, that This is a very juſt Inference, God himſelf hath informed us, by laying it as the Ground of his ſolemn Proteſtations, that he hath no pleaſure in the death of a Sinner, that *all Souls are his*; Intimating hereby, that it is contrary to all Reaſon and Equity, to ſuppoſe him delighted with the Deſtruction and Miſery, of that to which himſelf gave Being. Thus we ſee it is in Nature, that every Man hath a more than ordinary Tenderneſs, for thoſe Things which derive themſelves from him. The very Houſes of our own Building, the very Trees of our own Planting, give us a more ſenſible Delight, and we are more concerned for their Preſervation, than we feel for others, ready provided to our Hands. We are apt to look upon theſe, as, in ſome ſenſe, a part of our ſelves, and the ſame Propenſity, which inclines us to love our ſelves, does in proportion extend our Care and Affection to whatever is of our own making.

Wiſd. 11. 24, 26.

Ezek. 18.

Hence *David* recommending his People to God's kind Protection, thought it a very forcible Argument, to move his commiſeration of their Sufferings, when he prayed thus, *Thou haſt brought a Vine out of* Egypt, *thou haſt caſt out the Heathen, and Planted it. Return we beſeech thee, O God of Hoſts, look down from Heaven, behold and viſit this Vine, And the Vineyard which thy*

Pſal. 80. 8, 14, 15.

thy own Right Hand hath planted, and the Branch that thou madeſt ſtrong for thy ſelf. And *Iſaiah*, *But now, O Lord, we are the Clay, and thou our Potter, and we all are the Work of thy Hand. Be not wroth very ſore, O Lord, neither remember Iniquity for ever; behold, ſee, we beſeech thee, we are all thy People.* And *Job* in the bitterneſs of his Affliction. *Remember, I beſeech thee, that thou haſt made me as the Clay, and wilt thou bring me into Duſt again? Haſt thou not poured me out as Milk, and crudled me like Cheeſe? Thou haſt cloathed me with Skin and Fleſh, and haſt fenced me with Bones and Sinews. Thou haſt granted me Life and Favour, and thy Viſitation hath preſerved my Spirit. And theſe Things haſt thou hid in thy Heart, I know that this is with thee.* By which Words this Holy Man plainly ſignifies, that, though God ſuffered him to be afflicted to ſuch a Degree, as might almoſt tempt him to ſuſpect, that he had forgotten him, yet he was well aſſured, that his Goodneſs could not poſſibly forſake, or deſpiſe, one, who was his own Creature and Workmanſhip. Such a piece of Workmanſhip, eſpecially, as was framed upon the Model, and after the Reſemblance, of the Excellent and Almighty Artificer himſelf. And this very Conſideration ſupported *David*, under the ſenſe, not of his Adverſities and Sufferings only, but of his Sins and Infirmities too; that God, who made him, and underſtood him throughly, and ſaw the Temper of thoſe brittle Materials, of which he was compounded. That He, who underſtood this, would not fail to look graciouſly upon the Frailties and Neceſſities of human Nature, and to paſs by any the moſt grievous Offences, which theſe had betrayed him into. For here he lays the ſtreſs of his Hope and

Iſa. 64. 8, 9.

Job. 10. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13.

Pſal. 103. 11, 12, 13, 14. comfortable aſſurance of Pardon, *Look how far diſtant the Eaſt is from the Weſt, ſo far hath he removed our Tranſgreſſions from us. As high alſo as the Heaven is above the Earth, ſo great is his Mercy toward them that fear him. Like as a Father pitieth his own Children, ſo the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our Frame, he remembreth that we are but Duſt.*

From this reaſoning of *David*, we may infer another Ground for hope of Pardon; nay even for Aſſurance of being kindly received, when we turn to God; which is, that this Creatour of all things in common is, to Mankind in particular, a Father, a Title of Love and Tenderneſs, the greateſt of any in the World, inſomuch that the Philoſopher obſerved very truly, that no Man could conceive the Affection of a Parent, who was not one himſelf. Hence our bleſſed Saviour, to keep us mindful of this tender Regard, and provoke us to returns of Duty and filial Truſt, does as it were, to kindle one fire at another, very frequently make uſe of this Title in his Divine Diſcourſes. Thus we are commanded to forgive and treat them well, who uſe us ill, that we may be the *Children* of our *Father*, who makes his Sun to ſhine, and his Rain to fall on the Juſt, and on the Unjuſt. We muſt *be Perfect and Merciful, becauſe our Father in Heaven is ſo.* We are diſſwaded from anxious Care, and immoderate Concern, for the Things of this World, becauſe *our Heavenly Father knows that we have need of all theſe Things.* The force of which evidently lies here, that ſince God not only knows our Wants, but is our Father too; As the former Conſideration infers his Ability, ſo the latter will not fail to engage his Inclination. A Father's Heart cannot be

Mat. 5. 45, 48.

Chap. 6.

with-

without provident Care for his Children, nor ſee them want thoſe Neceſſaries, which it is in his Power to ſupply them with. And this our Lord confirms to us yet more, by inſtancing in the abundant Proviſion made for the Birds of the Air, the Flowers of the Field, and other Creatures, far leſs excellent, and of leſs eſteem in God's Sight: So that, if he be not wanting in his Care for Them, much leſs will he be ſo to Us, who are much dearer to him, than any other of his Creatures in this lower World.

Theſe Arguments have all the Relation of a Father for their proper Foundation, and they receive yet more Strength, from his being our *Heavenly* Father. One who in this kindneſs and paternal Affection exceeds all earthly Parents; as much as Infinite and Perfect is above Frail and Finite; as much as the Power and Clemency, and Goodneſs of Almighty God ſurpaſſes the infirmity of his worſt and feebleſt Creatures. A Father, who did not only impart Life and Being to his Children, but hath poured into their Hearts that yet more precious Gift, the Spirit of his own Divine eternal Son: by this, Gal. 4. ſtirring them up to Hope and Confidence in his paternal Goodneſs and Protection. And in Virtue of this Confidence, not only Saints, but Sinners, have fled to, and been kindly received by, him. So the Prophet *Iſaiah*, in the Name of his diſobedient People, made no difficulty to addreſs himſelf; *Doubtleſs thou art our Father,* Iſa. 63. 16. *though* Abraham *be ignorant of us, and* Iſrael *acknowledge us not; Thou, O Lord, art our Father.* And our bleſſed Saviour, after his Reſurrection, ſent that moſt comfortable Meſſage to his Diſciples, *Go and tell my Brethren, I aſcend to my Father, and your Father, to my God and your God.*

God. Thus, by theſe two Relations, the one importing infinite Power, the other infinite Love, taking away all diſtruſt of ſucceeding; as oft as we ſhall have recourſe to this *God* always able, to this *Father* always ready, and moſt willing to help us.

Thus God himſelf, after many Threatnings denounced by the Prophet *Jeremy* againſt *Iſrael*, for their Sins; leſt theſe ſhould drive them to deſpair, changes his Style, and aſſures them of his Favour, provided they ſincerely turn to him; telling them that he had *loved them with an everlaſting Love*, and *drawn them with Kindneſs*; that even his Threatnings and Puniſhments were Inſtruments of Mercy, and that they ſhould be refreſhed after their Afflictions, and gathered from their Diſperſion, becauſe I (ſays he) *am a Father to* Iſrael, *and* Ephraim is *my firſt-born.* And, a little after, to the rebellious Kingdom of *Samaria*, which was to receive Mercy, he delivers himſelf in theſe affectionate Terms: *Is* Ephraim *my dear Son? is he a pleaſant Child? for ſince I ſpeak againſt him, I do earneſtly remember him ſtill. Therefore my Bowels are troubled for him, I will ſurely have Mercy upon him, ſaith the Lord.* Theſe are the *Bowels* of Compaſſion ſo emphatically mentioned by *Zacharias*, to incline God in favour of Mankind, who had offended him. That true and tender Commiſeration of the Father in the Parable, whom, though his Prodigal Son had not only diſpleaſed, but utterly abandoned, though he had ſpent all his Subſtance in riotous and moſt ſcandalous Courſes, and reduced himſelf to the laſt Degree of Miſery, by his wicked Life, yet, upon his return Home, he was ſo far from diſdaining to receive him, that he ran to meet him with

Jer. 31. 4, 9.

V. 20.

Luk. 1. 77.

Luk. 15.

with open Arms, welcom'd and kiſs'd him, adorn'd him with the beſt Robe, made a ſolemn Feaſt, invited his Friends to rejoyce with him upon this Occaſion, and expreſs'd a much more ſenſible Satisfaction in his return, than if he had never gone away, or deſerv'd ill from him at all.

By all which figurative Repreſentations the Bleſſed Jeſus intended to give us a true Notion of our Heavenly Father's incomprehenſible love and Pity to relenting Sinners, when they come back to their Duty. With regard to which, he is called by the Apoſtles, *The Father of Mercies*, because this boundleſs Ocean of Mercies flows in a peculiar manner from the tender Diſpoſition of a Father. Which cannot ſo properly be ſaid of his Judgments; and therefore he is never called the *Father*, but the *God* of Juſtice, and Vengeance. In ſhort, This bleſſed Name of Father denotes all the Sweetneſs and Love, all the Friendſhip and Comfort, all the Care and Protection, all the readineſs to forgive, all the earneſt deſire to ſave his Children from Ruine, that we can poſſibly ſuppoſe belonging to that Relation. Nay, to give us the utmoſt aſſurance of Kindneſs, God does not ſuffer us to entertain Thoughts of him ſo mean, as that, any the moſt ſoft and tender Reſentments of the moſt affectionate Parent upon Earth, can equal or come near to his. *Can a Woman forget her ſuckling Child, that ſhe ſhould not have compaſſion on the Fruit of her Womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will not I forget thee, ſaith the Lord.* So ſhort of God's Kindneſs, is even a Mother's Love; ſo great aſſurance of Grace and forgiveneſs may we Children promiſe our ſelves, from God being our Father.

2 Cor. 1.

Iſa. 49. 15.

But ſtill we have a greater demonſtration of this Love behind, than either of the former.

An

An Evidence beyond all Parallel, and that, which alone would ſuffice to convince us, that God is moſt graciouſly and kindly diſpoſed toward us. Thus we find it repreſented in St. *John*, *So God loved the World, that he gave his only begotten Son, to the end that all that believe in him ſhould not periſh but ſhould have everlaſting Life.* This Redemption then, when we were in a loſt Condition, is a moſt irrefragable Proof of God's great Kindneſs. For what are we, that ſo precious a Ranſom ſhould be paid down for us, as the Life and Blood of his Eternal and only begotten Son? And how can we ſuppoſe, that he would have thought our ſafety worth purchaſing at ſo dear a Rate, had he not loved us above all meaſure? Nay, how exceeding abundant was this Goodneſs, which proceeded from his own mere Motion, without any motive on our part? For thus we are taught by the ſame Apoſtle, *Herein is Love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and ſent his Son to be the propitiation for our Sins.* I ſaid it had no Motive on our part; But that is not all. For we had laid the greateſt Bar that could be to obſtruct it, and provoked God to be angry irreconcileably, and to caſt us off for ever. And therefore here is the very Perfection of Goodneſs, that notwithſtanding all our Provocations, ſo much ſhould be done to reſcue us from Ruine. *In this God commendeth his Love toward us, that while we were yet Sinners, Chriſt dyed for us.* And, in another place, the ſame Apoſtle makes the greatneſs of this Mercy the Meaſure of God's abundant Love, *God* (ſays he) *who is rich in Mercy, for the great Love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins, hath quickned us together with Chriſt, and hath raiſed us*

Joh. 3.16.

1 Joh. 4.9.

Rom. 5 8.

Eph. 1 1. 4, 5, 6, 7.

up

up together, and made us ſit together, in heavenly places in Chriſt Jeſus; That in the Ages to come he might ſhew the exceeding, Riches of his Grace in his Kindneſs toward us, through Jeſus Chriſt.

This is the conſtant ſtrain of the New-Teſtament. And, What Inferences can we better draw from it, than thoſe, which we find ready drawn to our Hands by St. *Paul? He that ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how ſhall he not with him alſo freely give us all Things?* And again, *If, when we were Enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being juſtified we ſhall be ſaved from Wrath, and thus reconciled, we ſhall be ſaved by his Life.* He, who thought us worth ranſoming at ſo dear a Price, now that he hath made us his own by Redemption, what ſhall he not do for us? How can we ſuppoſe, he will not receive us, when our Salvation ſhall coſt him no more than a kind look; which in compariſon of what he hath done in our behalf already, is not ſo much as one Drop of Water, compared to the huge and bottomleſs Ocean? And this may ſuffice for the *Firſt* Branch of my Argument, conſiſting in the comfortable Aſſurance, which Sinners may have of his Kindneſs and readineſs to forgive, as he is their *Creatour*, their *Father*, and their *Redeemer*.

Rom. 8. 32.

Rom. 5. 9, 10.

Sect II.

How tenderly God expreſſes himſelf to Sinners in Scripture.

I Proceed in the next place, to conſider thoſe kind Declarations, which Almighty God hath made of his readineſs to receive returning Penitents

Wiſd. 12. tents, and the Methods of his proceeding in order to their Converſion and Salvation. The Wiſe Man introduces him, conniving at the Sins of Men for a Time, and holding his Hand from Puniſhment, to give them ſpace and leiſure for ſecond and better Thoughts: And, when by their Neglect, of theſe gentler Methods have no influence upon them, for their Reformation, but ſuch abuſe of Mercy does, as it were, extort ſeverity from his provoked Juſtice: He then proceeds gradually, and by ſuch Steps as are moſt likely to have a good Effect upon them. *Thou chaſteneſt them* (ſays the ſame Author) *by little and little, and warneſt them by putting them in remembrance, wherein they have offended; that, leaving their Wickedneſs, they may believe in thee, O Lord.*

Now theſe Two Inſtance are plain Evidences of great Goodneſs in Almighty God. *Firſt*, To wink at Man's Wickedneſs, and with unſpeakable Patience and Long-ſuffering, to expect their amendment; according to that of the Isa. 30. 18. Prophet *Iſaiah*, *Therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and therefore will he be exalted, that he may have Mercy upon you.* And then in purſuance of the ſame kind Intentions, when it cannot conſiſt with the Methods of his Government, to ſuffer their Tranſgreſſions to paſs any longer uncorrected, ſo to moderate and temper his Juſtice with Mildneſs and Mercy, as always, in this Life, to reſerve a place for Pardon and Amendment, and not to cut off thoſe Offenders utterly, whom he finds it neceſſary to chaſtiſe.

To theſe Two Inſtances we may add another, yet more wonderful than the former. Which is, that he, who is the injured and offended Party, does yet make the firſt Advances towards Re-

Reconciliation: And, though in Equity he might take Revenge at his Pleaſure, and deny us pardon, even when we ſeek it moſt importunately; yet does he in moſt amazing Condeſcenſion, offer us Peace of his own accord; nay, he humbles himſelf ſo low, as to intreat, and court us, that we will accept his Friendſhip, and our Safety. Thus the Majeſty of the great God ſtoops to the Vileneſs of his moſt unworthy Creatures; and the Prince and Lord of the whole World takes upon him the part of the meaneſt Slave. He makes his Addreſs to us, as if we could deſerve his Love, or were in ſome Degree neceſſary and advantagious to him, to him I ſay, whoſe abſolute and perfect Happineſs cannot poſſibly receive any Addition from the moſt excellent Works of his own Hands.

The many Examples of God's dealing with his People the Jews, are a manifeſt Proof of this. And thoſe many kind Expoſtulations, where he ſollicits *Jeruſalem's* Converſion, with a moſt affectionate earneſtneſs. The Prophet *Iſaiah*, in particular, will furniſh us with Inſtances, of Entreaties ſo preſſing, Complaints ſo moving, Conferences ſo friendly, Proffers of Pardon ſo free, Suſpenſions of Puniſhment ſo relenting, Teſtimonies of Love ſo unfeigned, Leagues of Amity ſo firm; that whoſoever ſhall read and conſider them, muſt needs confeſs with *David*, that the *Lord is gracious*, and *his Mercy is over all his Works*. And the like we find in that Prophecy of *Jeremiah*; which foretells indeed the Rejection and Exile of that People. But yet in ſuch Terms, that, even after this dreadful Reſolution was taken, and the time of Execution drew near, his Bowels yearned over thoſe obdurate Sinners, and the Prophet Iſa. 42, 43 *&c.*

phet is ſent to warn them, again and again, of
Jer. 7. 2, 3. their approaching ruine. *Yet now hear the Word of the Lord, all ye of* Judah, *that enter in at theſe Gates, thus ſaith the Lord of Hoſts, the God of* Iſrael, *amend your Ways and your Doings, and I will cauſe you to dwell in this place*; But when theſe Promiſes had no effect, then God proceeds by
19, 20. Threatnings to fright them into their Duty. *Do they provoke me to anger ſaith the Lord? do they not provoke themſelves to the Confuſion of their own Faces? Therefore thus ſaith the Lord God, Behold, my Anger and my Fury ſhall be poured out upon this place, upon Man, and upon Beaſt, and upon the Trees of the Field, and upon the Fruit of the Ground, and it ſhall burn and ſhall not be quenched. And*
33. *the Carcaſes of this People ſhall be Meat for the Fowls of the Heaven, and for the Beaſts of the Earth.*
Chap. 8. 1. The Enemy ſhall come, and ſhall *bring out the Bones of the Kings of* Judah, *and the Bones of the Prieſts, and the Bones of the Prophets, and the Bones*
3, 4, 5. *of the Inhabitants of* Jeruſalem *out of their Graves. And Death ſhall be choſen rather than Life, by the reſidue of this evil Family in all the places, whither I have driven them.* And yet ſtill, God puts not off all his tender Relentings, for thus it follows, *Shall they fall, and not riſe? Shall he turn away and not return? Why then is this People of* Jeruſalem *ſlidend back, with a perpetual backſliding?*

By theſe and infinite other means of Mercy God long contended with that hardned People, and laboured hard to gain them to himſelf. And, when thoſe had no ſucceſs, he ſuffered Captivity and Deſolation to fall upon them. Nor does he even then give them up utterly, but in that State of Miſery and Bondage, promiſes to forget all their former Obſtinacy, and ſtill to be gracious, and to reſtore them again,

pro-

provided they would, though late, bethink themſelves, and repent, and accept the Mercy then tendered to them.

And is it poſſible for any Man, who reflects at all upon this manner of Proceeding, to deſpair of Pardon upon return and ſerious Amendment! Suppoſing his Offences to be never ſo grievous, yet can they not exceed thoſe of the Jews; whom God in his indignation brands with the reproachful Titles, of *rebellious, impudent*, and *ſtif-hearted*, a People loſt to all Shame, and of an incorrigible diſpoſition. And yet what variety of excellent Arts, and Holy Importunities, were employed to procure this People's Amendment? Nay, For our farther Comfort and Encouragement, I muſt add one moſt remarkable Paſſage more from this Example, which indeed is ſo high an exceſs of Goodneſs, that no human Imagination could ever have apprehended it, no Reaſon could have rendred it probable, or credible, had not God, who is Truth it ſelf declared, that ſo it is. Thoſe Promiſes I mean, made to Sinners, that if they do truly and earneſtly repent, God will not only blot all their paſt Iniquities out of his Remembrance; but even rejoyce in their Converſion, and receive and cheriſh them with greater tenderneſs, than if they had never forſaken and departed from him at all. This is the true Importance of that kind Meſſage by *Iſaiah, Comfort ye my People, ſpeak comfortably to* Jeruſalem, *and ſay unto her, that her warfare is accompliſhed, that her Iniquity is pardoned, for ſhe hath received of the Lord's Hand double for all her Sins:* And again, deſcribing the Happineſs of their being reſtored to favour, *The Light of the Moon ſhall be as the Light of the Sun, and the Light of*

Ezek. 2.

Iſa. 11. 1.

Iſa. 30. 26.

of the Sun shall be sevenfold, as the Light of seven Days; in the Day that the Lord bindeth up the breach of his People, and healeth the stroke of their Wound. What God thus promises to his People the Jews, we are well assured, shall be the Happy Condition of every Penitent in particular. For to this purpose it is, that our Lord, in those most comfortable Parables, describes the Joy and Satisfaction God and Angels take in the Conversion of a Sinner, by the Feasting and Gladness of the Shepherd, retrieving his stray Sheep, of the careful Woman seeking and finding her lost Piece of Money, and of the compassionate Father, gladly receiving the Prodigal Son. And thus much may suffice for the *Second* Branch of this Argument, the kind Expressions, and wonderful Means made use of by God, to invite and encourage Wicked Men, to abandon their vicious Courses, and return to Him and their *Duty*.

Sect. III.

Concerning the Assurance of Pardon, which God hath given to all them that truly repent, and turn to him.

After so large a Declaration, what exceeding Love God bears towards Mankind in general, and the earnest Sollicitations he makes use of to win Sinners over to their own Happiness, it will be a farther strengthening to this Argument, to observe, what Assurance he hath given all those, who are desirous to make some returns of Love, and willing to comply with his importunate Calls, that they shall be pardoned, and accepted, by him. And, although this

this might be sufficiently gathered, and conceived from the Passages and Arguments already insisted upon; yet to take off all disquieting Doubts and Fears of this most important and comfortable Truth, I shall enlarge a little more, and endeavour to possess my Reader with the fullest and clearest Evidence of the Thing. In order whereunto, there can be but Two sorts of Proof necessary; which are, the Words, and the Actions of this offended Majesty; What he hath promised to every one who sincerely flees to him for Refuge; and what he hath actually performed to Persons, who have grievously offended him in any kind whatsoever.

For the *First* of these, his Promises; Nothing can be more apparent, than that the whole bent and drift of Scripture is in effect the same with that Text of *Isaiah*, *Let the Wicked forsake his Way, and the Unrighteous Man his Thoughts; and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have Mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly Pardon.* Ch. 55. 6. It is not possible for any Engagements to be more express or solemn; for any Invitations to be more vehement and affectionate; for any Declarations to be more absolute and universal, than those, which his infinite Goodness hath condescended to make use of upon this occasion. No People, no Person, no Time or Season is excepted, But, *Whensoever the Wicked Man turneth away from his Wickedness that he hath committed, and doth that which is Lawful and Right, he shall save his Soul alive. Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his Transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die.* Ezek. 18. 27, 28. No kind of Sins, though never so heinous and horrible, are excluded, *All his* v. 22.

Transgressions that he hath committed, they shall
Isa. 1. 16, *not be mentioned unto him. Wash ye, make ye clean,*
17, 18. *put away the Evil of your doings; Cease to do Evil, learn to do well. Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord; Though your Sins be as Scarlet, they shall be as Snow; though they be red like Crimson, they shall be as Wool.* And again, to shew, that the foulest unfaithfulness is no bar to Mercy, God invites an adulterrous People to
Jer. 3. 1. Reformation in these Terms, *They say, If a Man put away his Wife, and she go from him, and become another Man's, shall he return unto her again? Shall not that Land be greatly polluted? but thou hast played the Harlot with many Lovers, yet return again unto me, saith the Lord.* Thus we see all Qualities and Conditions of Men, how manyfold, how contemptuous soever their Transgressions have been, are contained within these Exhortations to Repentance, and Promises of Remission.

And what more can be expected, what greater Encouragement can possibly be given, upon these Occasions? Was ever any injur'd Prince so large, in offers of Clemency to his rebellious Subjects? Was ever provoked Father so tender, so easy to be reconciled, to his disobedient Children? Who can suspect himself to be accepted out of those Assurances, in which all sorts of People, all kinds of Sins, all Times and Seasons of Repenting and Believing, are manifestly comprehended? O wretched Man! who by distrust excludest thy self, whom God hath not excluded. What is there in these general, these affectionate Promises, which any Man alive can find a colourable Pretence to make the least Question of? Shall we doubt the Intention of the Promiser? This is only Charity

ty and Compassion, and consequently can design nothing but our Good. Shall we suspect the Sincerity and Fidelity of the promiser? He is Truth it self, and cannot deceive us; Heaven and Earth are not so firm; even These in time shall fail and pass away, but it is not possible for his Word to fail. Shall we fear his Ability to perform what he hath promised? His Power is infinite, and knows no restraint, no Bounds, but what his Will is pleased to set to it; And these very Promises are the authentick Declarations of this Will, and how far he thinks fit to extend that Power. What Scruple then can remain to disquiet us? Or which of the Divine Perfections can occur to our Thoughts, which will not minister Ground of sweet and unspeakable Consolation? *Three Things there are,* says St. *Bernard, wherein my hope consists, and is even rendred impregnable. The exceeding Love of him, who calls me to him by Repentance. The infallible Truth and certainty of those Promises, by which he hath obliged himself to forgive, and to shew Mercy; and the unlimited Power he hath to perform to the uttermost, every Word that hath proceeded out of his Mouth. This is,* to me, *that threefold Cord, which the Scripture says, cannot easily be broken: A Cord let down to Sinners from above, to draw us up from this Prison of a World, to Heaven, which is our true and proper Country:* and *by it, if we will, we may ascend to the very Sight and Possession of God's eternal Kingdom, and heavenly Glory.* Serm. de fragm. Misericord.

Thus much may suffice for the Nature and Purport of the Promises themselves, and will be still more confirmed by our Consideration of the *Second* Branch of this Argument, the Performance and actual Execution of them. Whereof God hath given us so many repeated, so ma-

ny eminent Instances from time to time, that, ever since the World began, no One Man was disappointed of his hope, who returned from Sin to God, provided this Conversion were hearty, and attended with those Qualifications, which the Scripture hath prescribed as necessary to its acceptance. And the force of our Reasoning upon this Point lies here; That, it is by no means probable, he will be worse than his Word hereafter, who hath all along kept it so punctually hitherto; Especially under the Christian Covenant, which instructs us in one mighty Advantage, peculiar to ours above former times; The knowing, that he, the very Person, who is our Judge, is also our Advocate, and Intercessor, and the Propitiation for those very Sins, of which he shall one Day come to take an account.

1 Joh. 2. 2.

Cast back thy Eyes then, sinful Man, whom thy own Fears have made faithless in this point, and take a view of all Times passed before thou cameſt into Being. Begin at the Creation, and continue thy enquiry down to this very Day; and tell me, if thou canst, in all this wide compass, of Persons, Places, and Ages, of any one, though never so black and vile a Sinner, who upon his unfeigned return to God, was not readily and graciously received by him. The Disobedience of our first Parents was presently remitted, upon their signification of Shame and Sorrow for it. Nay, it was not remitted only, but a promise was made of our blessed Saviour, the Son of God to be sent in humane Flesh, that by this means they, and all their numerous Posterity, might be restored to that Glory and Happiness, which by that Fall they had lost. There are indeed, between this and the renew-

ed

ed Expressions of this Promise to *Abraham* and the Children of *Israel*, some very terrible Works of the Divine Justice and Vengeance, recorded by *Moses*. But they were such, as only the impenitent Offenders perished under; And these are few, in comparison of the many more Examples of his Goodness and great Mercy.

Two or Three Persons only, throughout the whole Bible are mentioned, to have been finally rejected of God, notwithstanding some Sorrow, which they seem to have had for their Offences. The *First* of these is the Murderer *Cain*; but it is observable, that he was so far from acknowledging his Wickedness, as absolutely and impudently to deny the Fact; and afterwards, upon Conviction, the Sorrow he had was turned into Confusion and Despair. The *Second* was *Esau*, whom St. *Paul* styles a *prophane Person*, and he found no place *for Repentance*, that is, he could not prevail to have the Blessing upon *Jacob* reversed, though he sought it carefully with Tears. And St. *Chrysostom* assigns this Reason for his Rejection, that *He did not sorrow as he ought to have done, nor were his Tears the Effect of true Grief and Goodly Remorse for the Fact he had been guilty of, but rather of Indignation and Rage.* The *Third* is *Judas*, in the New Testament, who did indeed make some shew of Repentance, but it was a Sorrow, therefore ineffectual, because attended with Despair; and urging him rather to put an end to his Agonies by Death, than by addressing to God for Mercy. These Instances therefore do not come up to the present Case: Nor can they justify any Man's Doubt of being forgiven upon true Repentance; because they only prove, that some

Hom. de pen. ad pop. Antioch.

Persons have been rejected, whose Repentance, whatever it might appear, was not true; but manifestly defective in some Qualification necessary to recommend it to God's acceptance.

But now if we turn our Eyes another way, and observe the numberless Instances of those sincere Penitents, who have been actually Received and Pardoned, no Prospect can be more sweet, more comfortable, more encouraging. From the time, that the People of *Israel* came to be formed into a distinct Nation, and governed by God's own appointment, how grievously, how daily did they offend his Divine Majesty? And yet, how graciously did his unspeakable Mercy Pardon and pass by the innumerable Faults committed against him? The whole Old Testament, in effect, is little else, than one continued Account of his incredible Patience, and infinite Compassion towards them. And, should I undertake to illustrate this Truth, by reckoning up all the particular Persons, admitted into Favour after many and grievous Provocations, it were hard to say, where it were proper to begin, or when it were possible to make an end. Let that most impious and profligate King *Manesses* serve as one Example for all, of whose most enormous Life and detestable Acts, the Books of *Kings* and *Chronicles*, and several Chapters in the Prophets speak so largely; Yet even this Man, when Misery and Captivity (a happy School oftentimes for Princes, whom Greatness and Prosperity had tempted to forget God, and despise Instruction and Reproof) when this Man's Calamities, I say, had brought him to a Sense of, and Sorrow for his former Wickedness, he became an eminent Proof of God's incomprehensible and boundless Mercy;

cy; he was accepted and forgiven, brought back from his Prison and Chains, and restored to his Throne, and, which is infinitely better, to God's Love and Favour again.

We have not, any where upon Record, a more remarkable, or a more celebrated Pattern of this kind, than the Case of the *Ninevites*, and therefore I cannot think it amiss to be somewhat particular in it. Against that People God had pronounced a Sentence of Destruction, and set himself a short Day for the Execution of it, which the Prophet *Jonas* was therefore commanded to go, and give them warning of. He, knowing very well the Nature of God, and the true Importance of his Threatnings, how readily he is disposed to spare and forgive, if Men, upon the notice of his Anger, be careful to appease it by sincere and speedy Amendment, foresaw, that if he should carry this Message, and they should make the right use of it, their Calamity would be prevented, and so he should incur the censure of a false Prophet. Hence he chose rather to flee away by Sea to *Tarshish*, and so as he thought, escape the ungrateful Employment. But Almighty God so ordered the Matter, that, upon a Storm, the Ship's Crew cast *Jonas* into the Sea; there a Whale was ordered to receive him, and, after his miraculous Deliverance from this devouring Fish, he was a second Time commanded to repair to *Nineveh*, and execute his Commission. Accordingly he preached, that within forty Days that noble and populous City should be utterly destroyed. And the consequence of this Warning, was exactly what *Jonas* had before suspected. The *Ninevites* believed his Message, and immediately betook themselves to Repen-

tance; God was satisfied with their Humiliation, and revoked the severe Decree gone out against them. *Jonas* at this was greatly scandalized, and expostulated the Case with God, very warmly; But God shewed him the unreasonableness of his Discontent, and so silenced his Complaints, that he was not able to make any Reply in his own Vindication: Which yet was done in so wise, so sensible, so moving a Manner, that few passages in Scripture are either more surprising, or better deserve our serious Consideration.

The angry Prophet could not bear to stay any longer in that City, the saving of which he vainly lookt upon, as a Reflection upon his Honour and Truth; and therefore he had provided himself a little Booth, without the Walls, whether he retired, and was sheltered there from the heat of the Sun, by a *Gourd*, that cast a Shadow over him. This *Gourd* God ordered a Worm to Smite, so that it withered, and left him exposed to the Weather; and, when this Loss had provoked him to great Impatience, his Murmurings are answered thus. *Thou hast had Pity on the* Gourd, *for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow, which came up in a Night, and perished in a Night: And should not I spare* Nineveh, *that great City, wherein are more than sixscore Thousand Persons, that cannot discern between their Right Hand and their Left?* This then was the Plea, in defence of God's so very great inclination to Mercy, that the *Ninevites* were his own Workmanship, and the Labour of his Hands. A Plea, that holds equally Good, with regard to all Mankind, and of which, the Force hath been explained in the former part of this Chapter. But this, and what

Jon. 4.

what hath been alledged beſides, relates to Things done under the Old Teſtament only, before the appearance of Chriſt in Fleſh; and falls much ſhort of that Seaſon of Grace, under which we live at preſent.

For now, God himſelf is come down to us in Perſon, to ſhew the Riches of his Mercy, and diſcover all the fullneſs of it to wretched undone Mortals. No Examples of former Ages are once to be named in Compariſon of that Clemency, extended by this laſt and moſt perfect Diſpenſation, to Mankind. Our Maker, and Maſter, hath ſuffered his Juſtice to be vanquiſhed, as it were, and triumphed over by Mercy; and, in marvellous Compaſſion, hath dwelt in this Vale of Miſery, converſed with his Creatures, on purpoſe to offer Pardon and Happineſs, to as many as are content to embrace it. He does not only open the Fold to all thoſe Sheep which had gone aſtray and return of their own accord; But the Shepherd himſelf travels into the Wilderneſs to follow and look them out; And, when they are found, he brings them back upon his own Shoulders rejoycing; nay he hath laid down his own Life, and ſhed his deareſt Blood in their defence, and to preſerve them from the Wolf. O ſweet Jeſus? What can be greater Love than this? What more convincing Teſtimonies of Affection can the Heart of Man imagine or deſire? Can we ſuppoſe, that he whoſe Bowels yearned over us ſo tenderly, will not open all the Treaſures of his Goodneſs for us, when we return to him? Can he think any thing too precious, too much to do for us, who was content to redeem us at the expence of ſo much Suffering! Can we wonder that St. *Paul's* Character of the Goſpel, that

Luk. 15.

John 10.

that in it *Grace doth much more exceedingly abound?* when God did thus empty himself for our sakes, and shed forth all the Riches of Heaven, for a Demonstration of his inestimable Love, to them that should ever after Repent and Believe?

From this kind Disposition it was, that our Lord, while upon Earth, delighted to converse with Sinners, to Cheer and Comfort their desponding Spirits, and give them Courage and Confidence in Him. And this he did so publickly, as thereby to incur the censure of the Scribes and Pharisees, and the contempt of many ruling Persons among the Jews. Hence flowed those gracious Words, and affectionate Invitations, *Come unto me all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. If any Man Thirst, let him come unto me and Drink*; and *Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out. The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. There is more Joy in Heaven over one Sinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine just Persons who need no Repentance.* Hence this Holy one of God was reputed and reproached, as a Friend and familiar Acquaintance of Harlots, and Publicans and Sinners. And so far indeed he was their Friend, as a Physician is to the Sick; he received, and embraced, and healed, and forgave, all that repaired to him. Scribes and Pharisees, Soldiers and Publicans, Harlots and Thieves, the most infamous Offenders; Assuring us that thus he would continue to do, after his Ascension, and when seated at the Right Hand of God. For there also is our Judge, but our Advocate too; our King, but our Mediatour, our God and our Redeemer, our Father and our Brother, our Priest and our Sacrifice; and in this double Capacity it is, that our safety con-

Mat. 11. John 6. Mat. 9. Luke 15.

conſiſts. Since he who muſt determine our Cauſe, loves us moſt dearly, and pleads it for us withal moſt earneſtly and affectionately.

What then may we not, what indeed ought we not to, hope, at the Hand of ſuch a Lord, who hath left us ſuch ample Declarations, and ſuch undeniable Demonſtrations of his Love, ſo many unparalleled Inſtances of Kindneſs and Condeſcention, and ſuch noble Monuments of inexhauſtible Mercy? Why ſhould not his dealings with other People inſpire us with a becoming Confidence; and put every Sinner upon taking Heart from theſe, as a Standard and Pattern of what he intends to do, for every one, who at any time comes in to Him? Why ſhould not the Sweetneſs and the Remembrance of that Love, which hath been ever of old, draw us after him? according to that Meditation of St. *Bernard* upon thoſe Odours mentioned in the Book of *Canticles*. "Sweeteſt Jeſus, ſays he, "the freſh, and delicious Scent of thy wonder-"ful Clemency invites us to run after thee, "when we are told, that thou deſpiſeſt not "humble Suiters, and doſt not abhor Mourn-"ing Sinners. We know, O Lord, full well, "that thou didſt not reject the Thief that con-"feſſed thee, nor the ſinful Woman that Waſh-"ed thy Feet with her Tears, nor the Canaani-"tiſh Stranger that humbly expoſtulated her "Caſe with thee, nor the Woman taken in "Adultery when brought before thee, nor the "Publican that followed thee, nor that Diſciple "that denyed thee, nor that other, who perſe-"cuted thee; nor thy Murderers and Tor-"mentors, who Scourged and Crucified thee. "All theſe, O Lord, are ſo many rich Per-"fumes of thy moſt ſweet Mercy, and by the "Fra-

"fragrancy of theſe thy Ointments, we follow "and gladly run after thee.

SECT. IV.

The Application of the former Sections.

ALL that remains upon this Argument, is to apply the Glorious Things ſaid of God's Mercy to each Man's Conſcience and particular Purpoſe. And theſe Things are indeed ſo very glorious, that, it is not eaſy to conceive, how any Man, who reads and believes them, and is truly ſorry for, and ſincerely diſpoſed to forſake his Sins, can entertain any Doubt or Diſtruſt, whether he ſhall be pardoned for them or not. *It is God that Juſtifies, Who is he that condemneth?* ſays St. *Paul.* If he be inclined to deliver us, who ſhall be able to pluck us out of his Hands? If he declare, that he might be appeaſed, and upon what Terms we may depend upon Forgiveneſs, why ſhould we preſume to ſuſpect him worſe than his Word? Why ſhould we not rather ſupport our ſelves with that juſt Confidence adviſed by St. *Paul*, who calls upon Us, and upon every Sinner, in that Exhortation to the *Hebrews*. *Let us draw near with a true Heart, in full aſſurance of Faith, having our Hearts ſprinkled from an evil Conſcience, and our Bodies waſhed with pure Water: Let us hold faſt the profeſſion of our Faith without wavering, for he is faithful that promiſed; and let us conſider one another, to provoke unto Love, and to Good Works.* The Apoſtle here plainly ſignifies, that any Sinner whatſoever, who ſhall reſolve to purge himſelf from all his paſt Guilt, and ſhall employ the remainder of his Life in Charity and Good Works,

Heb. 10. 22, 23, &c.

may

may boldly, and with great aſſurance; approach to Almighty God; and ſhall not fail of Remiſſion and a very kind Entertainment.

And if this be the true State of the Caſe, what Reaſon can any Man have to deſpair? Why ſhould any Sinner caſt away that Soul, which God hath ſhewed himſelf ſo very deſirous to ſave? What a lamentable Thing is it, to ſee ſo many Chriſtians languiſhing under the Burden of their Sins, and abandoning themſelves to all manner of careleſs and diſſolute Living, (which by the way, is the true Notion of Deſpair) out of this unreaſonable and ſenſual Imagination, that they are gone ſo far already, and ſunk ſo deep in Senſuality and the Habits of Vice, that it is impoſſible for them to amend, or in vain for them, to think of ſucceeding by ſuch a Change of Life. I cannot better addreſs my ſelf to this ſort of Men, than St. *Chryſoſtom* hath done, and therefore ſhall entreat my Reader, that he will very diligently attend to his reaſoning upon the Matter.

"Art thou, ſays he, bred up in a falſe Reli- Hom. 2. in
"gion? Think upon the Wiſemen of the Eaſt. Pſal. 51.
"Art thou an unjuſt Perſon? Think upon the
"Publican. Haſt thou lived in uncleanneſs?
"Think upon the Harlot. Art thou a Murder-
"er? Conſider the Thief upon the Croſs. Art
"thou a profane Perſon? Think upon St. *Paul*;
"Once a Blaſphemer, but afterwards an Apo-
"ſtle; Once a Perſecutor, but afterwards a
"Preacher of the Goſpel; Once a *Tare*, but
"afterwards converted into Good *Wheat*;
"Once a Wolf, but afterwards a Shepherd;
"Once Lead, but then changed into Gold;
"Once a Pirate and Robber, but afterwards a
"careful Pilot; Once a Deſtroyer, but after-
"wards

"wards a Planter of God's Vineyard; Once a
"Puller-down, but afterwards an eminent Ma-
"ſter-builder of the Church. In him you ſee the
"exceſs of Malice, in him too the utmoſt vi-
"gour of a fervent Zeal; in him both the Folly
"of the Servant, and the Clemency of the Ma-
"ſter. Say not therefore in Bar to thy Repen-
"tance, I am a Blaſphemer, or a Perſecutor,
"or a Man of impure Life; you have Inſtan-
"ces of all theſe Kinds before you, and a ſafe
"Port to eſcape Shipwrack by, notwithſtand-
"ing. The Old Teſtament preſents you with
"*David*, the New with St. *Paul*. Do not there-
"fore frame to thy ſelf vain Excuſes, or pre-
"tend Difficulties, where there are none. If
"thou haſt ſinned, repent. If thou haſt ſinned
"a thouſand times, repeat thy Repentance as of-
"ten. This is the Balm, I would pour into
"thy Wounds, and this will aſſwage all the
"Anguiſh of them. I know the Shame and
"Deſpondency of a polluted and ſelf-condemn-
"ing Conſcience. The Devil ſtands at thy El-
"bow whetting his Sword to deſtroy thee, and
"ſuggeſting theſe fatal and terrifying Accuſati-
"ons. Thou haſt ſpent thy Youth in Riot and
"Senſuality, thou haſt ſquandered away thy
"Time; thou haſt been a Fornicator, an Un-
"juſt, a Covetous, a Perjured, a Profane, and
"Blaſphemous Wretch; And what hope canſt
"thou have, of being ſaved after all this? No
"no, thou art loſt forever. And therefore,
"ſince there is no Redemption, make the beſt
"of that little Life thou haſt left, and live in
"Jollity. Indulge thy Luſts, and never diſqui-
"et thy ſelf with fruitleſs Thoughts of amend-
"ing when it is too late.

This

"This is the Devil's Advice to Profligate "Men; but I adviſe the direct contrary. I "ſay, thou art not ſo far gone, but that thou "mayeſt yet recover thy ſelf. If thou haſt been "a Fornicator, thou mayſt ſtill be clean. If "thou haſt committed Adultery, thou mayſt "yet be forgiven. If thou haſt fallen thou mayſt "riſe again. Thy Repentance in compariſon is "but ſmall, but the Goodneſs of thy Lord is "exceeding great. If thou haſt been a Mur-"derer, be ſorry and Repent. If thou haſt "been Covetous and Unjuſt, make Reſtituti-"on, and grow wiſer, and better, for the "time to come. If thou haſt lived in Adultery, "do ſo no more. If thou art grievouſly wound-"ed, ſeek diligently for a Cure; While there "is Life there is Hope; though thou be got to "thy very laſt Day, to thy Sick-Bed, though "thou begin to draw thy Breath ſhort, yet even "then Repent. The Mercies of God are not "limited to any time, and, though thy Hours "be few, theſe Mercies are many and great. "But you will ſay, how can this be? My "Wounds are Mortal, and Putrified, and can I "be healed in an Inſtant? Yes you may; you "may be ſorry and confeſs from the Heart, and "if you do your part, God will do the reſt. "Betake your ſelf to Prayers, and Alms, and "all that your preſent Circumſtances are capa-"ble of; and do not ask, how theſe are poſſible "to ſucceed. It is God, that Works, and do "you expect I ſhould give you an account of his "doings? Almighty Power is concerned in "your Recovery, and do you deſpair of the "Effect? Your Phyſician applies Remedies, "and you rely upon his Skill, and ſubmit to his "Methods, without enquiring how they ope-

"rate.

"rate. How abſurd is it then, to truſt the Skill "of a Fellow Servant, and a Creature like your "ſelf, and at the ſame time to diſtruſt the abi- "lity and kindneſs of your Lord and Creatour? "Leave off your Doubts, and wonder and ſtand "amazed, and magnify this Spiritual Phyſician. "Shall God be diſpoſed to put away thy Sin, "and ſhall the Guilt of any Sins be too great "for his Mercy?

"I would not be miſunderſtood in this Argu- "ment. My meaning is not to encourage your "Careleſſneſs, or to encourage the vain Confi- "dence of thoſe who wilfully perſiſt in Sin to "the very laſt; but it is, to give you juſt No- "tions, and Hopes of God's marvellous Good- "neſs, and to prevent thoſe Men falling into "Deſpair, who do truly and earneſtly Repent; "for none of theſe are loſt, if they do not give "themſelves up for loſt; and ſo are diſcoura- "ged from repenting.

In which long Diſcourſe, this excellently Good Man takes Care, ſo to ſuſtain the worſt of Sinners, with a Confidence of God's Mercy at what time ſoever they duly ſeek it, as not to bear them out in Negligence, or any wicked Delays of this neceſſary Duty. To which purpoſe St. *Auguſtin* likewiſe very Prudently and Piouſly admoniſhes Wicked Men; *Let no one*, ſays he, *after a Hundred, no nor after a Thouſand Sins utterly deſpair of God's Mercy; but yet let him not ſo hope for it neither, as not to apply for it immediately: For when I forbid Deſpair, I would be underſtood to quicken Men up to reconcile themſelves to God by amendment of Life. Otherwiſe it is very poſſible, that, when Cuſtom hath hardened a Man in Vice, and rendred it familiar and habitual to him, he may not find himſelf able to deliver himſelf from the*

De Temp. Serm. 58.

Snares

Snares of the Devil, when he would be very glad to do it.

And again. "It is not every Man that commits Sin that God hates, and declares against, "as an Abomination to him, but such Sinners "only, as transgress wilfully, and continue in "their Wickedness. For no Man that will "amend, and leave off his wicked Courses, can "in reason, nay he may not in Duty, distrust of "God's Mercy. Since by his Prophet he himself hath sent us that comfortable Message, "*Cast away your Transgressions, and so Iniquity shall* Ezek. 18. "*not be your ruine.* But then this Mercy of God "is of Advantage to us, then only, when it "does not defer our Conversion, nor prove an "Encouragement to bind Sin upon Sin. The "Danger whereof, with regard to our Soul's "Health, I think my self capable of giving you "some tolerable Apprehension of, by the resemblance between the Wounds and the Sickness of this part, and what Sense and Experience teaches us in our Bodies. If a Man's "Leg, or Arm be broken, we need not be told, "how much Pain and Trouble it costs him before it be set, and perfectly cured again. But "if any Limb happen to be broken or wounded, Twice, Thrice, or oftner still, in the very same place, You can easily imagin, how "much more difficulty there must needs be to "reduce this part to its primitive Strength "and Soundness. Just thus it is in the Breaches "made upon our Souls too. If a Man fall into "Sin, and repent it a second time, and then apply himself to the proper Medicines quickly, "by taking Sanctuary in unfeigned Repentance, such a Cure while the Wound is Green "will ask no long time, and may possibly be so

" perfect too, that not ſo much as a Scar ſhall
" be left behind: But if he ſuffer the Sore to
" putrifie and enflame, by adding Sin upon Sin,
" if he be more ſollicitous to cover, than to heal
" the Wound, it is much to be feared a Mortifica-
" tion will enſue: That Doom, I mean, pro-
" nounced by the Apoſtle, will be his Lot;
" who tells them that are ſo ſtupid as not to be
Rom. 2. " ſenſible, that *the Goodneſs and Forbearance of*
" *God ſhould lead them to Repentance; that they do*
" *by this hardneſs and impenitent Heart, heap up to*
" *themſelves Wrath againſt the Day of Wrath, and*
" *Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God, who*
" *will not fail to render to every one according to his*
" *Deeds.*

And what more powerful Argument can be urged, at once to ſupport our Hopes, of Mercy, and to take down our Preſumption? The Preacher tells us, that the *Words of the Wiſe are as Goads*, they enter deep, and ſpur us on to Virtue. And, can we hear ſuch Words as theſe, without any Impreſſion, any Awakening at all? I hope not; And, for that Reaſon, will cloſe this Chapter with another Paſſage out of the ſame Author, than which it is not eaſy to conceive any Thing more fitted to move us, or more pertinent to the Subject we are now upon.

" Almighty God (ſays he,) never deſpiſes
" any Man's Repentance, provided it be offer-
" ed to him, from an Honeſt Heart. Nay, he
" accepts it gladly, he embraces the Penitent
" moſt gladly, he endeavours to reſtore the
" Perſon to that State of Purity, in which he
" was, before he fell. And, which is more,
" though a Man be not able to exerciſe ſuch a
" Repentance, as is perfect in all its parts, he
" accepts of what he can do, though it be done

" in

"in never ſo ſhort a Space. He doth not ſuffer
"any Degree of Converſion to Periſh, or loſe
"its juſt Reward. This I take to be *Iſaiah's*
"meaning, when, in the Perſon of God, he
"ſays to *Iſrael*, *For a ſmall Moment I have forſa-* Iſa. 54.
"*ken thee, but with great Mercies will I gather thee.*
"*In a little Wrath I hid my Face from thee, but*
"*with everlaſting Kindneſs will I have Mercy on thee.*
"Let us then, having theſe Examples before
"our Eyes, neither perſevere in our Wicked-
"neſs, nor deſpair of Reconciliation, if we for-
"ſake it. Let us rather ſay, with Hearts full
"of Hope, *We will ariſe and go to our Father*, and
"turn to the Lord our God; for moſt aſſured-
"ly he will never turn away from any Man,
"that truly turns to Him. Himſelf hath
"ſaid, *Draw nigh to God and he will draw nigh to* Jam. 4.
"*you; cleanſe therefore your ſelves ye Sinners, and*
"*purify your Hearts, ye Double-minded*; for no-
"thing but Sin can keep up a diſtance, and ſe-
"parate between him and us. Let us then take
"away this Bar, and nothing ſhall hinder that
"Friendſhip and Union, which he greatly
"deſires. For to this very end did he create us,
"that he might beſtow upon us eternal Bliſs in
"his Heavenly Kingdom. Hell was not made
"for us; but his own Kingdom was made for
"Men, and Hell for the Devil. Obſerve the
"difference of thoſe two Sentences, which our
"Lord declares ſhall be pronounced at the laſt
"Day. *Come ye bleſſed Children of my Father, in-*
"*herit the Kingdom prepared for you, from the*
"*Foundation of the World*: This to the Saints; but
"to the Damned, *Depart from me, ye Curſed,*
"*into everlaſting Fire, prepared for the Devil and*
"*his Angels.* If then Hell Fire was made for
"Devils, but the Kingdom of Heaven was pre-

" pared for Mankind, and that from the begin-
" ing of the World, It lies upon us, only to
" take care, that we do not loſe our Inheritance
" by continuing in Sin. While we continue in
" this Life, we are ſtill in a Capacity of waſh-
" ing away our Sins by Repentance, how many
" or grievous ſoever thoſe Sins may formerly
" have been. But, when once we are taken out
" of the World, though we be then never ſo
" ſorry, and repent never ſo heartily, (as no
" doubt we ſhall) yet all our Grief will then
" ſtand us in no ſtead at all. Our Teeth may
" gnaſh, our Mouths cry out, our Eyes guſh
" out with Tears, our Hearts moſt bitterly de-
" plore our ſad Condition; but there ſhall be
" none then to hear our Prayers or Complaints,
" none to help or pity us; not ſo much as a
" drop of Water upon the tip of a Finger,
" ſhall then be obtained to cool our Tongue in
" the midſt of Flames unquenchable, and Tor-
" ments unſpeakable: That killing anſwer of
" *Abraham* to the Rich Glutton is all we are
" to expect, *Between us and you there is a great*
" *Gulph fixed, ſo that they who would paſs from*
" *hence to you, cannot; neither can they paſs to us,*
" *who would come from thence.* This Exhortati-
on of St. *Auguſtine's* is ſo full, ſo directly to our purpoſe, againſt deſpair of God's Mercies in the one extreme, and ſuch a Preſumption upon them as may render Men negligent and ſecure on the other; that it at once encourages our Amendment, and ſhews the Danger of delay-ing it. And therefore I cannot think any Thing more neceſſary to be added, upon the Subject deſigned to be treated of in this *Firſt Chapter.*

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

The Second Obſtruction to a Holy Reſolution. The pretended Difficulties of a Good Life. The fallacy of this Pretence diſcovered, and the many Advantages, which render Virtue and Piety eaſy and pleaſant, explained.

THe Conſiderations of God's infinite Goodneſs, and the undeniable Proofs of his readineſs to forgive, have, I hope, ſet my Readers Heart at reſt in that point; and ſecured him from all Temptations, that would provoke him to Deſpair. A Temptation which the ſubtle and malicious Enemy of Souls knows to be ſo utterly void of all Ground, that this very Mercy of God, upon which we have been enlarging, is Matter of perpetual Envy and Grief to him. And ſuch a one too, as, he is ſenſible, will not anſwer his Deſigns, except with Perſons long abandoned to ſinful Habits, and who have little time left to make a thorough Reformation. This therefore is commonly the Method, by which he attacks the Profligate and Profane, the Old, the Hardned, or the dying Sinner. But thoſe, who have not been ſo deeply entangled in his Snares, and ſeem to have a great part of Life ſtill before them, he hath another way of managing. Theſe he perſwades to conſult their preſent Eaſe, to be careful how they engage in the practice of Chriſtian Virtues, by repreſenting Religion under a falſe Light, as a

Difficult, Unpleaſant, and very Painful undertaking: full of Melancholy, and void of all Comfort; That, which deſtroys Good Society, robs them of all Mirth and Enjoyment of themſelves, and the World; expoſes them to perpetual Anxiety and Vexation of Mind, and enjoyns Severities by no means ſupportable, to ſuch Bodies, ſuch Education, and ſuch Inclinations and Cuſtoms, as the generality of Mankind carry about with them, and have been all along bred up in.

How plauſible, and withal, how fatal, an Artifice, this is, we may eaſily perceive, if we reflect at all, either, how it is calculated to flatter, that Principle of Senſuality to which corrupt Nature ſtands ſo ſtrongly byaſſed; or upon the vaſt Numbers of People ſeduced by it; Who adhere to theſe Inſinuations, as the beſt Counſel and moſt perfect Wiſdom, and look upon them, who chooſe, or adviſe, a contrary courſe as Men, either overborn by Prejudice, or defective in Diſcretion and good Senſe. So that this pretence of the Difficulties and Diſadvantages attending a ſtrict and holy Life, is become a very ſtrong, and a very uſual Obſtruction; Such, as diſcourages infinite Souls from a reſolute and vigorous purſuit of Holineſs and Salvation; and therefore it is abſolutely neceſſary to the Deſign I am driving on, to examin it throughly, and give it a full Anſwer.

Now here firſt of all, I ſhall take the liberty to affirm, that allowing the Objection, and even ſuppoſing the Practice of Virtue encumbred with all the Hardſhips which the Adverſary of Souls, and our own partial Luſts, endeavour to charge it with; yet, even upon theſe Terms, it deſerves our Preference, becauſe the Rewards

wards it propoſes are ſo incomprehenſibly glorious, and deſirable, that no Pains ought to ſeem too much in order to the attaining them. Nay, I might urge the ſame Argument farther, with regard to the inſupportable and infinite Puniſhments, reſerved for the Diſobedient and Wicked too. For, if we think it Wiſdom to be ſo exceeding ſollicitous, for avoiding much leſs Calamities; If no Labour no Trouble be declined, which may preſerve us from Impriſonment, or Sickneſs, from the loſs of Goods, or of this wretched and tranſitory Life; Can we then, in reaſon, think any thing too much to do, or to endure, which may deliver us from thoſe Torments of Hell Fire, that are not only Intolerable, but Eternal? The former of theſe Conſiderations is urged by St. *Paul*, who tells us, that *the Sufferings of this preſent time are not worthy to be compared with the Glory that ſhall be revealed.* Rom.8.18. The latter intimated by St. *Peter*, who, after the declaring the certainty of our Lord's coming to Judgment, infers, *what manner of Perſons ought we then to be in all manner of Holy Converſation and Godlineſs?* 2Pet.3.11. As if he ſhould have ſaid, no Labour, no Hardſhip, ought to ſeem grievous to us, whereby the Terrours of that dreadful Day may be avoided. What do we think the Rich Man in the Parable would do; What would he not do, to purchaſe a releaſe from thoſe tormenting Flames, of which he there complains ſo bitterly? How would he Labour, and Pray, how bountiful would he ſhew himſelf in his Alms, rather than fall again into that Place of Miſery? After how very different a manner would he behave himſelf, from what he did while upon Earth, could he be allowed to lead his Life over again, and put the Iſſue of his final State upon a ſecond Tryal?

To theſe Pains fit for us to ſubmit to the taking, upon our own Account, a farther Motive might be fetched, from the infinite Pains Chriſt took for us; The infinite Benefits he hath beſtowed upon us; The infinite Offences we have committed againſt him; The infinite Examples of Saints, who have travelled this rugged Way before us, who yet were in all points as ſenſible of, and naturally as averſe to Trouble and Suffering, as our ſelves are. And ſure, upon all theſe accounts, it would very ill become us to boggle at, and be diſcouraged by, ſome Difficulties, were they in reality as many, and as great, as ſome Perſons form to themſelves, and as the Devil repreſents them to be, when he labours moſt to magnify them to us.

But, in very deed, the matter is quite otherwiſe; and all theſe frightful Ideas are an Artifice of the Enemy, contrived to diſcourage, and deceive, and deſtroy us. Our Lord hath told us moſt truly, that *his Yoke is eaſie, and his Burden is light*; and St. *John*, for our Comfort, declares, that *his Commandments are not grievous.* Whence then comes it to paſs, that Men conceive ſuch inſuperable Difficulties, attending a Chriſtian's Obedience? One Reaſon no doubt, and next to the deluſion of the Tempter, the chief is, that Senſe they have of a depraved and diſeaſed Mind; but, while they feel themſelves languiſhing, under the Malady, they attend not to the Medicine prepared to heal it. St. *Paul* indeed calls himſelf a wretched Man, *in regard of the Law in his Members, which he found perpetually warring againſt the Law of his Mind:* (that Rebellion of Appetite left in our ſenſitive Soul by original Sin) but then, he forgets not at the ſame time, to magnify *the Grace of God through*

Mat. 11. 30.

1 Joh. 5. 4.

Rom. 7.

through Jeſus Chriſt, which *delivered him from the body of that Death.* So theſe Men ſhould do well, in the midſt of all the deſponding Reflections upon their own Infirmities, to remember that ſupport given to St. *Paul* in his diſtreſs, *My Grace is ſufficient for thee, for my Strength is made perfect in Weakneſs.* 2 Cor. 12. 9. Their Caſe is much like that of *Eliſha's* Servant, who gave himſelf for loſt, when ſurrounded with a huge Army of *Syrians*, ready to aſſault him; but, by the Prayers of his Maſter, God opened his Eyes, and diſcovered an inviſible Guard, which he thought not of; Chariots of Fire, and Hoſts of Angels, much more numerous and powerful, than all the force that came againſt him. 2 Kings 6. And then he was ſoon convinced, that they who took his part were much the ſtronger ſide, and that he was abſolutely in ſafety, even then when his Danger appeared moſt formidable.

Thus is it with the weak and fearful Chriſtian; whoſe Heart miſgives him upon the approach of Temptations, and the Senſe of his own Inability to reſiſt them. The Conflict appears painful, the Conqueſt impoſſible; but it is, only becauſe his own Negligence hath hindred him from taſting thoſe heavenly Refreſhments and powerful Succours, which Almighty God never fails to ſuſtain thoſe faithful Combatants with, who are willing and ready to enter the Liſts, and fight manfully under his Banner. St. *Paul*, who had Proof of theſe Advantages, gives another account of the Matter; and, after reckoning up all the Hardſhips which could render this Service hotteſt, ſhouts forth with Triumph, *In all theſe Things we are more than Conquerours, through him that loved us.* Rom. 8. 37. And then he proceeds to that noble Proteſtation, that

Rom. 38, 39. that *neither Death nor Life, nor Angels, nor any other Powers, nor Things preſent, nor Things to come, nor any Creature* whatſoever, *ſhould be able to ſeparate him from the Love of God*, or make him abandon his Service. And this, upon the confidence of that aſſiſtance, of whoſe Spiritual Efficacy he ſticks not to affirm, that *he could do even all Things, through Chriſt ſtrengthning him.* Phil. 4. 13.

The Prophet *David* had reſpect to this Aſſiſtance, when he promiſes for his own Diligence and Fidelity upon it, *I will run the way of thy Commandments, when thou haſt ſet my Heart at liberty*, and how cheerfully he did this, is plain, from his profeſſing, that he *had greater Delight in theſe, than in all manner of Riches, that they were more to be deſired than Gold, or precious Stones, and ſweeter than Honey and the Hony-comb.* And thus, by magnifying, not only the Advantage, but the Pleaſure of a virtuous Life, he utterly confounds all thoſe idle pretences of Difficulty and uneaſineſs, with which our own ſloth, or the ſubtlety of the Tempter, would deter us from it. And, if *David* could ſpeak ſo largely in commendation of the Old Law, which yet was much harder than the New; how much more may Chriſtians alledge in vindication of a Covenant of Grace, where the Service is incomparably more eaſy, and the Aſſiſtances toward it more abundant and effectual. Pſal. 119. 19.

For I would ask any Man, who ſcares himſelf with theſe fantaſtical Images of invincible difficulty, to what Purpoſe he thinks Chriſt came into the World? Why did he take our Fleſh, and Labour, and Suffer, and Bleed, and Die for us? Why does he intercede ſo earneſtly with the Father, and appoint his Sacraments for conveyances of Grace? Why did he ſend his Spirit

Spirit and publiſh his Goſpel? What are thoſe *Good Tidings* which the *Goſpel* imports? What mean thoſe terms of *Grace* and *Mercy* ſo often inculcated, and the ſweet and comfortable Name of *Jeſus* ſo much repeated there? Does not all this infer Deliverance from our Sins? Mar. 1.21. From Sins paſt by the Death of our bleſſed Redeemer, and from Sins to come, by the ſame Death, and the helps of his Grace, ſhed upon us more abundantly than before? Was it not foretold, as one principal end of Chriſt's coming, *that the crooked ſhould be made ſtreight, and* Iſa. 40. 4. *the rough places plain?* Were not the Gifts of his Spirit diſtributed for this very purpoſe, that the exerciſe of Piety might be rendred eaſy and delightful, that Men might have truſt in Dangers, and joy in Tribulations, and aſſurance of Victory, if they ſtrive lawfully? Is not this the Deſign, the Subſtance, the Sum, of the Goſpel, the Promiſes of the Prophets, the Doctrine and Belief of all the Saints? The very thing, wherein the ſo much boaſted Riches and Treaſures of God's Mercy in this new Covenant do truly and properly conſiſt? So that, to deny it, is in effect to evacuate the whole Goſpel, and, if we ſuppoſe it impoſſible for us to get the better of our Sins, we plainly ſuppoſe, that all Chriſt hath done and ſuffered for us, hath been done and ſuffered in vain.

This might ſuffice to diſpoſſeſs Men of the Notions they frequently entertain, concerning the Terms of a Chriſtian's Duty, as if it were an impracticable, or an uncomfortable Undertaking. But, in regard theſe Temptations to feeble-mindedneſs and dejection are both very uſual, and very fatal too, I think it not amiſs upon this Occaſion, to ſhew what particular ſupports Men have,

have, or may have, in this Buſineſs, if they be not wanting in the due ſeeking and applying them. And here, I ſhall *firſt* of all inſtance in the ſundry Helps, by which God facilitates the Good Man's Duty; and then *ſecondly*, I will add ſome Inſtructions and Admonitions, how we may make our beſt advantage of thoſe Helps.

Sect. I.

The Helps for making a virtuous Life eaſy.

TO pretend to give a particular account of thoſe excellent Arts and Means, made uſe of by God, for the cheriſhing, comforting, and ſtrengthening the Souls of his faithful Servants, were a very bold, and a vain Attempt. Many ſecrets of this kind there are, many private ſignifications of his Love, which none, but They who feel, can either diſcover or conceive. My endeavour therefore ſhall be to mention thoſe known and ordinary ways only, by which the Scripture tells us, God is wont to ſweeten the obſervance of his Laws, and to ſhow himſelf preſent with Good Men, for their Conſolation and Encouragement.

1. The *Firſt* of theſe is the Infuſion of his Grace into their Souls, which ſtrengthens Them, as it did St. *Paul*, in Temptations and Diſtreſſes. The force and efficacy whereof is ſuch, that it works a through Change many times in the whole ſtate of the Soul influenced by it; renders that clear which before was dark, and doubtful; makes things delightful, to which the Man before was moſt averſe; and thoſe eaſy, which he thought difficult, and

even

even impoſſible. With reſpect to this mighty Alteration, the Prophet ſays moſt emphatically, that *God would give his people a new heart, and put a new Spirit within them, by this means cauſing them to walk in his ſtatutes, and to keep his judgments and do them.* What could be ſpoken more ſignificantly of the Power of Divine Grace? What more pertinently to the taking off the ſcruples and fears of weak and doubting Chriſtians, than that, whatever they may find themſelves by Nature, they ſhall be made quite another ſort of Men by Grace? Thus St. *Paul*, ſpeaking of the Conqueſt over the ſenſual Principle within us, ſays, *We know this, that our old man is crucified with Chriſt, that the body of ſin might be deſtroyed, that henceforth we ſhould not ſerve ſin.* By the *old man* and the *body of ſin* the Apoſtle means our rebellious Appetites and Paſſions. And Theſe are therefore ſaid to be *crucified* and *deſtroyed* with *Chriſt*, becauſe, by his Death, we obtain Grace and Power to reſiſt and mortify theſe Appetites; and ſo to deliver our ſelves from the bondage of Sin, as not to contract the guilt of conſenting to it, if we will our ſelves aſſert our Freedom. This is that noble Victory promiſed long ago by *Iſaiah*, and applicable in it's exalted and ſpiritual Senſe to every Chriſtian, *Fear thou not, for I am with thee; be not diſmayed, for I am thy God; I will ſtrengthen thee, yea I will help thee; yea I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteouſneſs. Behold all they that were incenſed againſt thee ſhall be aſhamed and confounded; they that ſtrive with thee ſhall periſh; thou ſhalt ſeek them that contended with thee, and ſhalt not find them; for I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand.*

Ezek. 36. 26.

Rom. 6. 6.

Iſa. 41. 10. 11.

This

Thus ſhall theſe diſorderly Paſſions be, as though they were not, that is, They ſhall prove no hindrance to our Salvation. Nay they ſhall be better, than though they were not, and even promote our Virtue and Happineſs, if we take good care to manage them aright. For theſe Deſires and Paſſions, are like wild Beaſts, fierce and furious in their own Nature, and bent upon rapine, and miſchief, and deſtruction; but when maſtered and tamed, as by God's Grace and our own Diligence they may be, they become exceeding uſeful and neceſſary, and are a Whet and Spur to our Virtues. Thus Anger is ſerviceable to *Zeal*; Hatred to the irreconcilable averſion againſt Sin; Haughtineſs of Mind, to contempt of the World, and ſcorning to do mean and diſhonourable Things; Love, to the vigorous Undertaking of hard and heroick Actions, in conſideration of the Perſon, for whoſe ſake we do ſo, and the infinite Obligations which his Benefits innumerable have laid upon us, to decline nothing that may be acceptable to him. And beſides all this, The very Conflict neceſſary for the ſubduing theſe Paſſions, and that perpetual ſtruggle, in which we are exerciſed, is appointed and left to us, for our mighty Advantage. This it is, that finds Work for our Patience, our Humility, our Conſtancy; This makes our Deſert and our Victory in this Life, and entitles us to our Glory and Crown in the Life to come; as St. *Paul* obſervers in his own caſe; and this, in proportion, is the common Caſe of all Chriſtians.

2 Tim. 4. It is then to no purpoſe, that the ſlothful Man cries out upon *a Lion in the way*, and pretends the ſtrength of his Paſſions, the Weakneſs

neſs and Corruption of humane Nature, the Tenderneſs of his Conſtitution and his inability to ſuſtain the Hardſhips and laborious Exerciſes of ſtrict Piety and Virtue; Theſe and whatever other Allegations are cuſtomary upon this Occaſion, how gravely and ſolemnly ſoever urged in his own Vindication, are all mere Excuſes, trifling, falſe, diſhonourable, Excuſes: Detractions from the merits and efficacy of Chriſt's Death, who is dead in vain, if he have not reſcued us from the ſlavery of our Luſts, and rendred our Duty more pleaſant, and eaſy, and practicable than before. For, *if God be with us, who can be againſt us? The Lord is our light and our Salvation, whom then ſhall we fear? The Lord is the ſtrength of our Life, of whom ſhall we be afraid? Though an hoſt were encamped againſt us, yet will we not caſt away our confidence. For God is on our ſide, and through him will we overthrow our Enemies, and tread them under that make head againſt us.* Nay, we will do it with Eaſe; for ſo much intimates St. *John*, when he ſays, *God's Commandments are not grievous*, and adds immediately, for *whatſoever is born of God overcometh the World*; and *this is the Victory, that overcometh the World, even our Faith*: 'Tis this reſolute perſwaſion of the Mind, this dependance upon his Truth and Promiſes by thoſe Aſſiſtances which are never wanting to true Believers, conquers the Difficulties and Temptations of the World, and makes the way of God's Commands ſmooth and pleaſant. And ſo much of the *Firſt* and principal Help, the Source of all the reſt, the Grace of God inſpired into the Soul of every faithful Chriſtian, for his ſtrength and comfort.

Rom. 8. 31. Pſal. 27. 1, 2. Pſal. 44. 5.

1 John 5. 4, 5.

A *Second* thing, which contributes much to *eaſing* Chriſt's *Yoke*, and *lightning his burden* is, fervent Love of that God, whoſe Commandments we undertake to obey. And here, I need not labour, ſince every ones own Experience will tell him, how irreſiſtible the force of this Paſſion is, and how ſupportable it renders the moſt difficult and painful Undertakings. What, but this could make tender and delicate Mothers take ſuch perpetual, ſuch infinite Pains in bringing up their Children, and even rejoycing in their unwearied Labours for them? What but this, ties us to the Beds of our ſick Friends, in deſpight of all the noiſomneſs of their Diſeaſe, or all the Inconveniences which Watching, or Attendance, or Infection, may bring upon us? Nay, what elſe moves the very Brute Beaſts to ſpare from their own Food, to expoſe their own Lives for the ſuſtenance and protection of their Young? And therefore (as St. *Auguſtine* preſſes the point,) If Merchants balk no hazard for Love of Gain; if Hunters are beat out of the Field by no Weather, for Love of Sport; if Soldiers march up to the Mouth of a loaded Cannon, for Love of Booty: If Men can love the Creatures ſo vehemently, that great Labours ſhall ſeem eaſy, nay, that they ſhall ceaſe to ſeem Labours, and be courted as Pleaſures; How much more ſhall the Love of Good Men towards God, the beſt, the only perfect Object of their Affections, make all thoſe Pains eaſy and comfortable, which are taken with a deſign to pleaſe him here, and in order to a full and eternal Enjoyment of him hereafter?

Serm. 9. de Verb. Dom.

This vehemence of Love was that, which ſoftned all that intolerable anguiſh both of Bo-

dy

dy and Mind, which Chriſt endured, and cheerfully embraced, for our Sakes. And the deſire to return this Love was the reaſon too, why ſuch bitter Sufferings ſeemed as nothing, to the Zeal of the Primitive Chriſtians. Priſons, and Racks, and Fires, and Croſſes, all were welcome for the ſake of that Dear Lord and Maſter, in compariſon of whoſe Favour, Life it ſelf was not, ought not to be eſteem'd dear. Theſe are the natural effects of true and fervent Love, to make Difficulties vaniſh, and to render any thing which may recommend us to the Party beloved, however harſh in it ſelf, yet, with that proſpect, ſweet, or at leaſt very ſupportable: And much more may we expect it ſhould do thus, with the Commandments of Almighty God, which, abſtracting from all other Conſiderations, are in themſelves moſt juſt and reaſonable, and worthy to be made every wiſe Man's Choice. " He that truly loves God, " hath a feeling of what I ſay, but if I ſpeak to " a languid and cold Heart, it is no wonder, " if He do not underſtand me. And hence it ſeems to be, that our Lord ſo very often mixes the mention of Love, with that of keeping his Commandments. As knowing it to be the only ſure Ground, upon which the regard and obſervance of them entirely depends. And the general want of this, no doubt, it is, that brings them under ſuch a general diſreſpect. Thus we find him telling his Diſciples, *If ye love me, keep my Commandments*; and *He that hath my Commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me*; and, *If a Man love me, he will keep my Words; he that loveth me not, keepeth not my Sayings.* And St. *John* to the ſame purpoſe. *This is the love of God, that we keep his Command-*

Aug. in Joan. Tract. 26.

Joh. 14, 15, 21, 23, 24.

1 Joh. 5. 3.

ments, and his Commandments are not grievous. They are not ſo, to One that loves him; This ſingle Conſideration renders them otherwiſe; becauſe he ſtudies to pleaſe God above all things, and ſo gets quit of that, which makes every Action burdenſom, the doing it againſt a Man's Inclination and good-liking. And this is ſo ſure a Mark, that my Reader will do well to meaſure himſelf by it; and to ſee, by the delight, or the lothneſs and diſreliſh he finds to good Actions; what Portion he hath, or whether indeed he have any of true Love for his Lord and Saviour.

To theſe Two I might add ſeveral other Privileges and Comforts of Piety and Virtue, infinitely to be preferred before all the Jollity and Enjoyments of the Gayeſt and moſt Proſperous Sinner in the World. And the next I ſhall name is, a certain peculiar Light of Underſtanding, ſtyled in Scripture-Language, *Wiſdom*, and the *Knowledge of the Holy*. By which is meant, a ſingular Advantage of being directed, more effectually than Common Men, in Spiritual Matters, relating to Salvation, and the means neceſſary for obtaining it. This *David* acknowledged as a Mercy from above, *Thou haſt made known to me the way of Life*; *Thou makeſt me to underſtand Wiſdom ſecretly*; and, *I have more Underſtanding than all my Teachers, for thy Teſtimonies are my Meditation. I am wiſer than the Antient, becauſe I keep thy Precepts.* This is that ſaving *Light*, with which Chriſt is ſaid to *enlighten* his Servants, and the *Unction of the Holy* one to teach them all things. This is that *Writing of God's Law in Men's Heart*, promiſed by *Jeremiah*, and abundantly performed under this Seaſon and Covenant of Grace; and the

Prov. 9, 10.

Pſal. 119, 99, 100.

John 1.

1 Joh. 11.

Jerem. 31.

Heb. 8.

the being *taught of God* foretold by *Iſaiah*. In a Word, This is that *Secret of the Lord, among them that fear him*, that Sovereign and uncommon Comprehenſion of the Laws of God, of the Excellency, the Wiſdom, the Advantages of them, which *David* ſo earneſtly deſires in that moſt Divine *Pſalm*, which begins with this vehement Expreſſion of his eſteem for it, *Bleſſed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the Law of the Lord. Bleſſed are they that keep his Teſtimonies, and that ſeek him with their whole Heart.* Iſa. 54. Joh. 6.

By this Illumination from above, directing good Men ſo carefully, their progreſs in Virtue muſt needs be rendred very comfortable. For it is in the Paſſage to Heaven, as in all the Journeys Men take in this World; The better Eyes any one hath, and the more perfectly he underſtands his Way, the more cheerfully and ſecurely he travels forward. It is of great Moment, to know where we go, what we do, how we ought to govern our ſelves, what Meaſures are to be taken, what Precipices and wrong Paths to be avoided, and what we are to expect at our Journey's End. With regard to all which, we may underſtand that of St. *Paul*, that *the Spiritual Perſon judgeth and diſcerneth theſe things*, but the Carnal and Natural Man is ſo blind and ſtupid, that he neither ſees them himſelf, nor receives them from ſuch as are both qualified, and deſirous, to inform him better. In the Perſon of theſe, *Iſaiah* deſcribes the Miſery of their State, *Judgment is far from us, neither doth Juſtice overtake us; we wait for Light, but behold Obſcurity; for Brightneſs, but we walk in Darkneſs: We grope for the Wall like the Blind, and ſtumble at Mid-day, as in the Night.* This is the Calamity of wicked Men; They are 1 Cor. 2. Iſa. 59. 9, 10.

not ſenſible, what ſlippery Ground they are upon; nor whither the Way, they are in, will certainly carry them at laſt; but live in moſt dangerous, and moſt uncomfortable Ignorance. *The light of Righteouſneſs hath not ſhined unto them,* (as the Wiſeman introduces them complaining) *neither hath the Sun of Wiſdom riſen upon them, but they weary themſelves in the way of Wickedneſs and Deſtruction*: And, in proportion, as the want of this Light muſt needs be wearisome and ſad, ſo the Enjoyment of it cannot but be very cheerful and comfortable to the Holy and Good Man.

Wiſd. 5, 6, 7.

4. Another very remarkable Advantage, which contributes much to the rendring Virtue eaſy and pleaſant, is, That inward and ſecret Conſolation, with which God ſuſtains the Hearts of them that ſerve him faithfully. I call it *Secret*, becauſe They only know it, who have received and felt it, for which reaſon Chriſt himſelf terms it the *Hidden Manna*, and *David* the *Plentiful Goodneſs, which God hath laid up for them that fear him.* Thus Almighty God promiſes, that *he will allure* the devout Soul, and *take her aſide into the Wilderneſs*, and *ſpeak friendly to her* in private. By all which Expreſſions of the *Wilderneſs*, and *Hidden*, and *laying up*, we are given to underſtand, that theſe Privileges are peculiar to the Godly, and that carnal and vitious People have no part in this Bleſſed Favour.

Rev. 2.
Pſal. 31.
Hoſ. 2.

But now, how exceeding great, how ineſtimably ſweet, theſe Heavenly Comforts are, to the Perſons that taſt and feaſt upon them, no Tongue of Men or Angels can expreſs. The abundance of their Joy *David* hath given us ſome Notion of, when he ſays, that with *God*

Pſal. 36.

is

is the Well of Life, and that good Men ſhall *drink of his Pleaſures, as out of the River.* So largely do they indulge in them, as to have no reliſh left for any Satisfactions of this vain World; but, like St. *Peter* upon the Mount, ſeem to forget themſelves, and talk of building Tabernacles, that they may ſet up their Reſt here for ever. This is that *River of Pleaſure* at God's right Hand, which deſcends from above, and overflows the Hearts of the Pious with Joy inexhauſtible. It is a Taſte of Heaven, while upon Earth, to refreſh and keep them from fainting in their Journey thither. A Sample, as it were, of that precious Treaſure, which God puts into our Hands, that we may judge of the true Worth of the Commodity, and, like Wiſe Merchants, not grudge to come up to his Price, even though he ſhould require us to ſell all we have beſides, for the purchaſe of it. *This is that Voice of Joy and Health, in the dwelling of the Righteous*, with regard to which the *Pſalmiſt* cries out in another Place, *Bleſſed is the People, O Lord, that can rejoyce in thee.* A Bleſſing which St. *Paul* was ſenſible of, when he ſaid, *I am filled with Comfort, I am exceeding joyful in all our Tribulation.* And what can be ſaid higher to deſcribe the Divine Power of this Spiritual Comfort, than that even Affliction and Perſecution cannot deſtroy, cannot ſo much as damp it?

Mat. 17.

Pſal. 118.

Pſal. 89.

2 Cor. 7.

If my Reader be concerned to know, how it comes to paſs, that he hath never yet taſted theſe ſweet Comforts, of which others give ſuch a magnificent Account; I muſt anſwer him, that the Reaſon is more than intimated before. This is not Meat for every Mouth, but kept up in reſerve for the Beloved, and

choſen of God. A Soul immerſt in Senſe, and worldly Pleaſures cannot be partaker of theſe Dainties; nor will they dwell with polluted Thoughts and Deſigns. The *Ark* and *Dagon* could not ſtand upon the ſame Altar, nor will Chriſt ſubmit to ſhare the Heart with *Mammon*. God ſent no *Manna* till all the Proviſion of *Egypt* was ſpent, and this Heavenly hidden *Manna*, is tied to the ſame Rules; it will not deſcend till vain Cares, and ſinful Inclinations are ſent off to make room for it. Though God be liberal, yet is he not laviſhly profuſe. He will not caſt his Pearls before Swine, nor give out Taſtes and Patterns, to Them, who have no Diſpoſition to buy. Do but reſolve unfeignedly to ſerve him, and ſet about it in good earneſt, and then this Joy will flow in upon thee; and, as it never yet failed any Man, ſo it will be ſure not only to anſwer, but far exceed, thy largeſt Expectations. The Evil Habits of thy paſt naughty Life ſhall be no bar to it. For ſo abundantly kind and tender is the God we ſerve, that he is forward in encouraging all that ſincerely return to him, and takes particular care, that They who have forſaken him long and wandred far, ſhall meet with at leaſt as friendly Entertainment, when they flee to him for Mercy, as others who never broke looſe from him at all.

This the Parable of the Prodigal Son was deſigned purpoſely to aſſure us of; whoſe re-
Luke 15. lenting Father received, and cheriſhed him, with greater Expreſſions of a ſollicitous and tender Affection, than he did the elder Brother, who had all along lived in his Family. And the Reaſons for this Behaviour ſeem to be Two. The One the Joy for recovering one

who

who ſeemed to be loſt, as our Saviour hath particularly illuſtrated the Caſe. The other, the Support and Encouragement of this returning Penitent, that he might have no reaſon to Repent of his Bargain, but immediately feel the advantage of ſo wiſe a Change. A Figure of this Proceeding with Chriſtians yet weak and timerous, God ſeems to have given us, in that memorable Paſſage of his conducting the Iſraelites, in their flight out of *Egypt*. *It came to paſs when* Pharaoh *had let the People go, that God led them not by the Way of the Land of the Philiſtines, although that was near; for God ſaid, leſt peradventure the People Repent, when they ſee War, and they return to* Egypt: *But God led the People about, through the Way of the Wilderneſs of the Red-Sea.* In like manner does he conſtantly conſider the preſent Circumſtances of his People; What their Infirmities, and their Occaſions are: He is careful not to diſcourage them with Difficulties too mighty for them to encounter; but leads them ſafely and gently, and ſuſtains them with thoſe preſent Satisfactions, which Minds, yet feeble, and lately eſcaped from the bondage of Sin, ſtand in need of to confirm them in their better Choice. O! Who can expreſs, Who can conceive, Who can admire, as it deſerves, this Love, this Management, of our moſt Wiſe, moſt indulgent Father! Exod. 13. 17.

5. A Fifth Privilege of Holy Men, which conduces very much to the Eaſe and Pleaſure of their Lives, is the Teſtimony of a Good Conſcience; Of which St. *Paul* made ſo great account, that he calls it his *Glory*, and his *Rejoycing*. And of this is that Obſervation of the Wiſeman true in the beſt and ſtricteſt importance of the Words, that *He that is of a merry Heart hath a* 2 Cor. 1. c. 10. Prov. 15. 15.

continual Feaſt. A Feaſt, which the Virtuous enjoy every day of their Lives; and how then is it poſſible, that Minds, thus quiet and ſecure, ſhould live in ſuch uneaſineſs, as the Men of the World fondly imagine? On the other hand, the Conſciouſneſs and Reproaches of Guilt are an unſupportable Torment to Wicked Men: who are inceſſantly ſtung, like *Cain* for the Murder of his Brother, and driven to all the
Gen. 4. Mat. 27. Mark 9. diſtractions of Deſpair, like *Judas* for his Treachery to his Maſter. This is that *never dying Worm* mentioned by our Bleſſed Saviour, which lies gnawing at their Hearts Night and Day. It muſt needs do ſo, becauſe Wickedneſs in its own Nature is determined to bear Teſtimony againſt it ſelf; and a troubled Mind always forebodes dreadful Miſeries hanging over its Head, becauſe it is ſenſible of having deſerved them. The wretched Condition of ſuch People is well deſcribed in the Book of *Job*, *The Wicked Man*
Job. 15. 20, &c. *travelleth with Pain all his Days, and a dreadful ſound is ever in his Ears. He believeth not, that he ſhall return out of Darkneſs, and he is waited for of the Sword. He wandreth abroad for Bread, ſaying, Where is it? He knoweth that the Day of Darkneſs is ready at his Hand. Trouble and Anguiſh make him afraid, and prevail againſt him as a King ready to the Battel.*

What Creature can be imagined in a more deplorable Condition, than he, who thus carries his own death about him? What Fears, what Perplexities, what horrible Deſpair, rend the Heart of this Wretch? Sinners, (ſays St. *Chryſoſtom* very truly,) ſuſpect every thing; they
Hom. 8. ad Pop. Antioch. "ſtart at their own Shadow, tremble at every "little Noiſe, and are jealous, that every Man "they meet is making at them to deſtroy them

"If

"If they ſee others talking, they preſently con-
"clude themſelves to be the Subject of their
"Diſcourſe. Such is the quality of Sin, that it
"betrays it ſelf, without any Accuſer: It keeps
"the committer in Fear, where there is no vi-
"ſible appearance of Danger; *The Wicked flee* Prov. 28.
"*when no Man purſueth.* And why does he flee?
"Becauſe he hath an Accuſer within, that is
"eternally purſuing him; This he carries
"about him, and cannot run away from; The
"worſt and moſt importunate of all Accuſers,
"himſelf, and his own Conſcience, which
"dogs him wherever he goes, and is conti-
"nually Upbraiding and Scourging, and
"Wounding him in the tendereſt part. But
"the *Righteous is bold as a Lion*; free, and eaſy,
"and brave, even in Danger and Death it ſelf.
And thus much may ſerve for our Fifth Conſide-
ration.

Sect II.

Some other Helps and Comforts peculiar to Good Men, and inſtrumental to their preſent Happineſs.

6. THe Priviledges, already mentioned, lead us very naturally to the diſcovery of another, which conſiſts in a lively hope, and moſt glorious Proſpect of eternal Happineſs and Salvation. And this is a noble Prerogative indeed; One of the richeſt Jewels imparted to Mortals, before they are admitted to a Participation of all the fulneſs of their Heavenly Father's Treaſures. This ſweetens the bittereſt Cup given us to drink in this Life, and turns Sorrow it ſelf into Joy. By this, with St. *Paul*, *We glory even in* Rom. 5. 3.

Tri- 4. 5.

Tribulations; becauſe we *know, that Tribulation worketh Patience; and Patience, Experience; and Experience, Hope; and Hope maketh not aſhamed.* This is our mighty ſtay amidſt the Toſſings and Tempeſts of a troubleſom World; for ſo it is
Heb. 6. 18, 19. called, *an Anchor of the Soul, both ſure and ſtedfaſt*; a *ſtrong Conſolation*, and *impregnable Refuge*, *faſtned* upon the Promiſes, which *God, who cannot lie*,
Eph. 6. hath moſt ſolemnly made to his Servants. This is that hardned *Helmet of Salvation*, which keeps off all the Blows, by which the Devil, and the World intend our Ruin, when they lay at us moſt furiouſly. In ſhort, this is ſo firm a defence to a Good Man, that come Health or Sickneſs, Riches or Poverty, Proſperity or Diſaſters, Life or Death; though the Floods of Perſecution riſe, and the Waves and Storms roar and rage never ſo horribly, ſtill the Language of his Heart is that of the Pſalmiſt, *My truſt is in God, I will not fear what can be done unto me.* Nay even with *Job*, he declares, *Though the Lord ſlay me, yet will I hope in him.* And this is, what the Scripture calls, the *Boldneſs of a Lion*, whoſe Excellence it is, to be then moſt couragious, when he is in greateſt danger.

But, with the ungodly it is not ſo: They have no part in this Confidence, no Inheritance in this Conſolation. The Scriptures tell us,
Prov. 10, 11. that ſuch Men's Hope *is vain*, that *it ſhall periſh*, that their expectation is full of Terrour in ſtead
Job 11. of Comfort, and is even as *the giving up of the Ghoſt*. How can we ſuppoſe it ſhould be otherwiſe, if we conſider Two Things? *Firſt*, That whatever wicked Men pretend, their Confidence is not in God, but in the World; they *truſt in the Arm of Fleſh*, as the Prophet expreſſes it, and make *Lies their Refuge*: The Riches, and

Streng th,

Strength, and Friendſhip, and Authority, and ſuch other tranſitory Advantages of the preſent Life, as cannot but deceive them. Thus the *Hope of the Ungodly* is repreſented as *Duſt blown away with the Wind*, as a *Froth or Bubble driven about in a Storm*, as the *Smoak diſperſed here and there with a puff of Air*, as *the Remembrance of a Gueſt, that tarrieth but a Day.* So exceedingly vain are all the Objects of a Wicked Man's Truſt, ſo quickly do they fail him, and ſo ſure are they to give way, and let him drive, upon the firſt ſpringing up of Adverſity. Wiſ. 5.14.

'Tis true indeed, theſe Men would not be thought to place their Confidence in theſe Things, but in God only: But in this they diſſemble, and therefore what one Holy Author calls the *Hope of the Wicked*, another truly ſtiles the *Hope of Hypocrites.* For indeed, with whom do theſe Perſons conſult, or whence do they look for aſſiſtance, in all their Difficulties? From God, or from the World? Is not this their Comfort in Affliction? Their Rejoycing in Proſperity? The end and aim of all their Actions and Deſigns? Is the Honour of God any part of the Wicked Man's Intention? Or his Law the Meaſure and Rule of his Proceedings? How then can he depend upon the Aſſiſtance of one, who hath no part in the Work? How can he flee to him for Succour in thoſe Dangers, for whoſe ſake they are not undergone? He builds not with the Wiſeman upon the Rock, but lays his tottering Foundation in the Sands; and therefore (as our Lord hath warned him) *when the Rain deſcends, and the Winds blow, and the Floods beat upon this Houſe*, (which if not before, will certainly happen at the Hour of his death) *the Houſe muſt fall, and the fall thereof* See Prov. 10. 28. Job 8. 13.

ſhall

ſhall be great. Great, for the greatneſs and ſadneſs of the Change; Great, for the Horrours which ſhall then aſſault him; Great, for the Miſeries he ſhall then indure; Great, for the unſpeakable Joys of Heaven loſt; Great, for the Exquiſite and Eternal Torments he ſhall then be caſt into; Great, in every Reſpect, that can juſtify our Lord's Choice, of this Expreſſion. And this is ſufficient for the *Firſt* Reaſon, why the Wicked Man's Hope muſt needs be vain, becauſe the Object of it is no better than Vanity; for it is not placed in God, but in the World.

The *Second* is, that, though we ſhould allow God to be really the Object of their Hope, yet is their Confidence altogether groundleſs, and not ſo properly Hope, as Preſumption. For, as the Scripture diſtinguiſhes between a *dead* unprofitable Faith, which profeſſes to believe, without practiſing accordingly, and a *lively* juſtifying Faith, which proves and exerts it ſelf by Good Works; So are there likewiſe two ſorts of Hope: The one of the truly virtuous Man, which is the fruit of a Good Life, and a Good Conſcience; the other of the Wicked Man, which not having the Foundation of a Good Conſcience, does not ſo truly hope, as without all Reaſon preſume upon Things, to which it hath no Title or juſt Pretention. St. *John* hath
1 Joh. 3. 21. ſtated this matter rightly, by ſaying, *Brethren, if our Hearts condemn us not, then have we Confidence towards God*; that is, If the Senſe of our own Guilt do not tell us, that we ought not to expect any Favour from him, whom we live in diſobedience to. And again more fully in the Words next following, *whatſoever we ask we re-*
22. *ceive of him, becauſe we keep his Commandments, and*

and do thoſe Things that are pleaſing in his Sight. To the ſame purpoſe St. *Paul*, *The End of the Commandment is Charity, out of a pure Heart, and a Good Conſcience, and Faith unfeigned.* Which Paſſage St. *Auguſtine* ſo expounds in ſeveral parts of his Works, as from thence to argue, that there cannot be any true Hope, where there is not firſt a Good Conſcience. St. *Paul*, ſays he, *adds* from a Good Conſcience, *Upon the account of a Chriſtian's Hope, for he that carries within him the Reproach and Contradiction of an evil Conſcience, deſpairs to attain the Things which he believes.* And again. *Every Man's Hope is in his own Conſcience, and is proportioned, according as he feels himſelf to love God.* And once more, *The Apoſtle puts a Good Conſcience for Hope, for he only, who hath a Good Conſcience, can have the Hope of a Chriſtian; where Men are ſtung with the Guilt of an evil Conſcience, they are forſaken of Hope, and can have no other proſpect than their own Damnation.* To this I might add many other Teſtimonies; and to the advantage of Good Men now under Conſideration, as many other valuable Prerogatives; but I will only juſt touch upon Two or Three more, and then diſmiſs this Subject.

1 Tim. 1. 5.

De doct. Chriſt. L. 1. c. 10.

In Pref. Pſal. 31.

7. Of theſe, the *Firſt* ſhall be, That moſt deſirable Liberty which Good Men enjoy above the Wicked. This is the purport of our Saviour's Promiſe; *If ye continue in my Word, then are ye my Diſciples indeed; and ye ſhall know the Truth, and the Truth ſhall make you free:* So likewiſe St. *Paul*, *Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty.* Now by this freedom is meant, a Deliverance from the Tyranny and Bondage of our ſinful and ſenſual Appetites, called, for diſtinctions ſake, the Inferiour part of the Soul.

Joh. 8. 31, 32.

2 Cor. 3. 17.

To

To which the Wicked are more miſerably enſlaved, than any the moſt wretched Captive in this World, to the moſt barbarous and bloody Maſter. For to what end do they labour, and drudge, and break their Sleep? Is it not all in the ſervice of Senſuality, and to gratify the meaner and brutal Paſſions of the Soul? The Man, that is overruled by any of theſe, how abſolute a Drudge is he? The Luſt of the Fleſh, for inſtance, what a Tyranny does it exerciſe? Not only the Perſons, who upon other accounts were by the Heathen worſhiped as Gods, as *Jupiter*, and *Mars*, and *Hercules*, but, which is more authentick, the Strength of *Sampſon*, the Sanctity of *David*, the Wiſdom of *Solomon*, all truckled under this Uſurpation. Nor is her Power and Cruelty leſs upon Chriſtians, who have not ſhaken off this Yoke; The Adultereſs, though ſhe know the Shame, and Scandal, and danger of her Crime, the loſs of God's Favour, the irreconcilable Hatred of her Husband, the Diſhonour of her Family, the Proſtitution of her Perſon, the Offence of all Good People, the Ruin of her Good Name, and Body, and Soul at once; Though ſhe know, I ſay, all theſe to be the ſure conſequence of her Folly, yet this domineering Paſſion bears down all before it, and will be obeyed in deſpight of Reaſon, and the feeble pretences of Religion, to the contrary.

Nor is it in this ſingle Point alone, that the dominion of Senſe is ſo abſolute; the Tyranny is univerſal, and holds in every other guilty Paſſion. The Ambitious and Vainglorious, purſues his Shadow of Honour and Fame, with the ſame Eagerneſs; he riſes early, and goes to Bed late; Travels all Day, and beats his Brains all Night; flatters and diſſembles, cringes in one Place,

Place, and looks big in another, makes Friends, and pacifies Enemies; brings every Action, every Deſign of his Life and Behaviour to bear down upon this own Point; and ſuffers no Time, though never ſo unſeaſonable, no Circumſtance, though never ſo inconſiderable, no Project, though never ſo foreign, never ſo wicked, to paſs him; provided his Ambition may be any way ſerved by it.

The Covetous Man's Caſe is directly the ſame, and ſo is the Drunkard's, the Angry and Revengeful; and in a Word, Every Man breathing whoſe Paſſions have got the upper hand of his Reaſon. No Slave, that is chained in the Galleys, there to row for his Life, endureth ſo mercileſs a Captivity. His Priſon and Fetters confine his Body only, but this Man's Mind is manacled and locked: His every Senſe, his Thoughts, and Faculties are all bound up; and never was there a truer Maxim in the very utmoſt extent of the Words, than that of our Bleſſed Saviour, *He that committeth Sin is the ſervant of Sin*; For, as St. *Peter* obſerves, *of whom a Man is overcome; of the ſame is he brought into Bondage.* Joh 8. 34. 2 Pet 2. 19.

Now from this Servitude the Righteous are delivered, by the prevailing power of Chriſt, and the mighty aſſiſtances of his Grace, ſo that they govern their Paſſions and Senſual Inclinations, inſtead of being governed by them. This is the ſpiritual importance of that Promiſe in *Ezekiel*, *They ſhall know that I am the Lord, when I have broken the Bands of their Yoke, and delivered them out of the Hand of thoſe that ſerved themſelves of them.* This the Benefit, which *David* ſeems to have had in view, when he makes that affectionate addreſs, *Behold, O Lord, how that I am thy Servant; I am thy Servant, and the Son of* Ezek. 34. 27. Pſal. 116. 16.

thine

thine Handmaid; *thou haſt broken my Bones in ſunder*; *therefore will I offer unto thee the Sacrifice of Thanksgiving.* And St. *Paul* yet more expreſly, according to the Genius of the Evangelical Style, ſays, *Our Old Man is Crucified, that the body of Sin might be deſtroyed, that henceforth we ſhould no more ſerve Sin.* By the *Old Man* and the *Body of Sin*, underſtanding that original Concupiſcence, which lurks in all our Hearts, and prompts us to Wickedneſs; and by the *Crucifixion* and *Deſtruction* of this ſuch a Subduing and Mortifying of this, evil Principle, that we do not obey its irregular Motions, but by the Grace of God, are ſo entirely ſuperiour to them, as if it did not ſubſiſt or act in us at all.

Rom. 6.

8. Upon this Priviledge of Liberty, there naturally follows another, which is Great Peace, and Calmneſs, and orderly compoſure of Mind; Whereas the Wicked are perfectly over-run with inteſtine War, and Confuſion. And therefore, by the Prophet, reſembled a *troubled Sea, whoſe Waters caſt up Mire and Dirt*; and, by St. *James*, to a City whoſe Inhabitants are all up in a Mutiny, and divided into Parties and Factions among themſelves. So that, while Good Men are ſerene and quiet within, and act with great Tranquility and Conſiſtence with themſelves, becauſe they are governed by the one, ſteady and uniform Principle of Reaſon, reduced to the obedience of God's Law; The Wicked are diſtracted and perplexed, like a Ship toſſed and driven too and fro with violent and contrary Winds. For theſe Luſts of Concupiſcence are many and almoſt infinite, and theſe purſue infinite Objects, and are never ſatisfied, but perpetually crying out *Give, Give.* For, when is the Ambitious contented with Honour, or the

Iſa 57. 20. Jam. 4.

In-

Incontinent with Carnality, or the Covetous with Wealth? So that a Man in the midſt of theſe, is like a Parent among a great Family of Children, calling for more Meat than can be had, to ſupply their hunger. Clamours and Importunities pierce his Ears on every ſide, and he is not able to gratify the leaſt of thoſe Wants or Requeſts, with which he is Teized and Tormented. But beſides, that theſe Deſires are inſatiable, and not to be quieted though we could attend to each of them diſtinctly; They are alſo very often contrary to one another, and ſo oppoſite in their Demands, that it is not poſſible to comply with one, without at the ſame contradicting another: and all *Babel* is in the unmortifyed Man's Breaſt, in its utmoſt Perfection. Thus vain Thirſt of Honour cries, *Spend Liberally*, and Covetouſneſs calls out, *Spare all you can*; Laſciviouſneſs ſays, *Venture for Pleaſure*, Pride replies *Pleaſure is bought too dear with ſhame.* Anger puſhes on to Revenge; Ambition perſwades to diſſemble an Injury, rather than make an Enemy. In a Word, here the Prophet's remark is accompliſhed, *I have ſpied Unrighteouſneſs and Striſe in the City. Unrighteouſneſs*, becauſe none of theſe Suggeſtions are from a Good Principle; and *Striſe*, becauſe they are full of Contradiction, and not to be reconciled with one another. And from this Confuſion nothing can deliver us, but that Peace of God, which Religion alone can give, alone can taſte. And who now can doubt the Truth of our Lord, when he calls his *Yoke eaſy, and his burden Light*; ſince the aſſiſtance of Grace, the Love of God, an enlightned Underſtanding, internal Conſolation, a quiet Conſcience, a cheerful Hope, perfect freedom of Soul, calmneſs and conſiſtence of

Mind, all conſpire to render a virtuous Life eaſy and pleaſant; Who can juſtly complain of uneaſineſs, who hath all theſe comforts to ſuſtain and cheer his Heart?

I cannot let this Argument go, without deſiring thee once more to reflect, upon what in part hath been ſpoken to already. The different Expectations of good and evil Men. How unſpeakable ſupport the one muſt needs find from an aſſured expectation of eternal Glory and Happineſs; how many ſad girds the other can not but feel from the apprehenſion of Damnation and everlaſting Torments in Hell. Were this alone the matter in difference betwixt them; How would the painfulleſt Life be ſoftned by that Hope? How would the moſt exquiſite Pleaſures of Sin and Senſe be embittered by theſe Fears? The Labourer encourages himſelf to bear the toil and heat of the Day, by the thoughts of his pay at Night. If Two Men were upon the Road together toward their own Country; The one called Home to be advanced and rewarded; the other to be arraigned and put to Death; do we ſuppoſe theſe Men could behave themſelves alike, or be equally pleaſant in their paſſage? Whatever Face the Malefactor might put upon the Matter, there is no doubt, but his Heart would give him many a twinge, and feel now and then a cold Qualm come over it, notwithſtanding all his counterfeit Mirth. And this, to be ſure is the Condition of Wicked Men, when Death and a future State preſent themſelves to their Thoughts. How differently muſt a Good Man think of leaving the World, which is his Priſon, and place of Suffering, when he exchanges this Life for one of Joy, and Bliſs ineſtimable? But how

me-

melancholy and diſmal are the Preſages and Approaches of that fatal Hour, which muſt certainly and ſhortly come? What a Heart-breaking is every Remembrance of it to them, who, when *they die their Expectation periſhes*; who are not only to hope for nothing better hereafter, but to endure a great deal more and worſe, than was poſſible for them either to feel, or to conceive here?

If then theſe Things be ſo, what ſhould ſtop my Reader from taking up, now at leaſt, that Holy Reſolution, to which I am all this while endeavouring to gain him over? Will he ſtill perſiſt in objecting the difficulty of the Attempt, and the unpleaſantneſs of the Way? Will he believe other People, who tell him ſo, though they have never made the Experiment, nor know any thing of the Matter? Methinks he ſhould rather believe the Declarations of his Lord and Saviour, affirming the contrary; Believe his own Reaſon, which upon a fair weighing the ſeveral Arguments already produced, and the quality of thoſe Ingredients, which make up the Happineſs of Virtue, will caſt the Scale on that ſide; Believe the Teſtimonies of Holy and Excellent Perſons, who ſpeak from their own Perſonal Knowledge, and long Experience: Such as *David*, St. *Paul*, and St. *John*, heretofore; And many hundreds more, which, by the Grace of God, are converted daily from a vicious Life, and the captivity of Satan; to the Love and Practice of Virtue, and the Glorious Liberty of the Children of Light. For even this Age, profligate and exceeding perverſe though it be, yet wants not the Inſtances of many happy Souls, who bear Teſtimony to this Truth, and rejoyce in the Comforts of Holy-

neſs, and proclaim with Thankfulneſs their own Felicity; Not only, that what I have ſaid is true to the uttermoſt, but that they feel more inward Peace, and ſweet Satisfaction in the Ways of Godlineſs, than I, or any Tongue living, ever hath ſaid, or ever can ſay in the Matter.

It is indeed a mighty Change, which is wrought in the Converſion of a Sinner; that Pride ſhould be turned into Humility, Covetouſneſs, into contempt of the World; Luxury and Laſciviouſneſs, into Mortification and Purity; Revenge and Anger, into Meekneſs and Charity; in ſhort, that the Man ſhould no longer be the ſame, but in Affections, Temper, and Delights, juſt the Reverſe of what he was before; and all this too, by that Alteration, to which his own Will muſt concur. Theſe are Effects, which, it is not to be wondred, if ſome Men think impoſſible; and in that Thought never attempt this Change. But this hath been the Caſe, and theſe the Doubts, of many Holy and excellent Men, * who yet upon Tryal have found the Grace of God able to conquer all Difficulties; and have taken marvellous Delight in thoſe Things, to which the vicious Courſes of their former Lives had once rendred them moſt averſe: They have found that very feaſible, which they eſteemed utterly impracticable; and have been tranſported with ſuch abundance of Joy, that their Hearts have ſcarce been able to contain, to bear it. And therefore, I would beg thee to make the Experiment. Much may be gained, but nothing can be loſt by it. The Matter is of vaſt importance, and worth venturing for; And, if thou ſucceed; as certainly ſucceed thou wilt, if thy Reſoluti-

*See Cypr. l. 1. Ep. 1. ad Donat. Auguſtin Conf. l. 6. c. 12, 13, 14, 15.

ons

ons be sincere and vigorous, thou art certain to gain as much as the immortal Happiness of thy Soul, and all the Glories of a Heavenly Kingdom are worth. And who in Matters of less Moment, declines such a venture, where the Advantage is inestimably great, and the hazard is so small, indeed is none at *all?*

Sect. III.

A necessary Caution to such as attempt this Change.

ONE thing is necessary to be premised here, in order to the preventing all Discouragements, that may arise, to Them who shall comply with this Advice. Which is, that This, like all other great Alterations, will require time to render it easy to us. A Man must not depend upon all these Joys at his first setting out, but ought to prepare himself for strong Encounters, much Reluctancy, sharp Temptations, and violent Conflicts with himself for a time. It was the Son of *Sirach*'s Counsel: *My Son, if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy Soul for Temptation. Set thy heart aright, and constantly endure, and be not impatient in time of trouble.* Eccles. 2, 1, 2. The reason of This is very obvious. For, while the Devil keeps quiet Possession, he hath nothing to do, but to sooth and lay the Man asleep, by suggesting fresh Delights perpetually, and Ministring to carnal and worldly Satisfactions. But, when he sees him attempting to break loose, and make an escape from his Snares, then he begins to rage, and tries all means possible to maintain his usurped Dominion over him. In this he resembles the Spirit

diſpoſſeſt by our Lord, immediately after his
Mat. 9. Transfiguration. It was Dumb and Deaf, while let alone, but when commanded to go out, it began to roar and foam, and tore the Body, leaving it for dead. Thus *Laban* concealed his Envy to *Jacob*, and never perſecuted him, till he had reſolved to depart. And *Pharaoh* doubled his Tyranny upon the Children of *Iſrael*, when he perceived them diſpoſed to quit his Country. And their deliverance from the Bondage of *Egypt* hath always been underſtood, as a Type and Image of the Deliverance of Souls, from the ſlavery of Sin and Satan.

St. *Auguſtine* was in this particular a very lively Example of the methods, by which great Sinners are brought over from Vice to Virtue. The account given of his own Converſion, in his Books of *Confeſſions*, is well worth our ſerious Peruſal, and capable of Miniſtring greatly to our Comfort and Inſtruction. There we ſhall find the ſore and long Combats with his Ghoſtly Enemy, before he could get clear of him, ſo much the ſorer and longer as he was afterwards a brighter Light in the Church of God. And this may well animate thoſe, who feel violent Oppoſitions to their Amendment, becauſe it is a ſign of more plenteous Meaſures of Grace, and glorious Things, which God intends to do by Them, if they have the Courage manfully to go through with their good Intentions. St. *Paul*'s Converſion hath greater marks of Violence in it, than any other we read of; he was ſtruck Blind, he was caſt down to the Ground, he was ſtunned with Thunder. And Why all this, but becauſe he
Act. 9, 22, 26. *was a choſen Veſſel to bear Chriſt's Name to the Gentiles,*

Gentiles, and to ſuffer many and great things for his Sake?

There again we ſee an eminent Inſtance of the Omnipotence of God, in reforming a Perſon of ſtrong, and once moſt ungoverned Paſſions, of confirmed Habits in the very Worſt, and ſuch as are commonly reputed the moſt incurable Diſeaſes. Such as Ambition, Avarice, Uncleanneſs, and many others which the Patient himſelf before his Converſion, thought it altogether impoſſible to ſubdue. There again we have not only an entire Victory over theſe Paſſions, but much more Charms and ſenſible Delight in the Conqueſt, than ever there had been before in the Gratification of them. Laſtly, here we may obſerve in this holy Man's Example, a Pattern for our Inſtruction and Imitation. In examining, and furthering our Call, by reading Good Books, conferring with Good Men, applying our ſelves to the ſtudy of the Holy Scriptures, hearkening and opening to Chriſt, when he knocks at the Door of our Hearts, praying and weeping, and private Meditation; deteſting and avoiding all wicked Suggeſtions, which would diſſwade us from a Complyance with the Motions of God's Good Spirit; and, upon conviction what he would have us to do, breaking off from the World and its Vanities, and betaking our ſelves to our Duty, without any manner of delay. Theſe are the things that qualify Men for Spiritual Conſolation and Delight, and all they, who behave themſelves according to this Rule, ſhall be ſure to find it, if not in the higheſt Perfection that a mortal State is capable of, yet, to be ſure, in ſuch a Meaſure, as the preſent Condition of their Souls requires.

And therefore, upon this occasion, I must advise my Reader to quit himself like a Man, and not spare himself at the beginning. The Corruption of Nature asks some Violence to bring it under; and our Passions, like fire, must be plyed close, and rushed upon at once, if we would put them out effectually. I will conclude this Matter with a Passage of St. *Bernard*, describing both the Methods, and the happy Effects of Reformation, in terms very applicable to our present purpose, "Christ, "says he, calls to us, *Take my Yoke upon you, "and ye shall find rest to your Souls.* This Invi- "tation is strange and new, but it is made by "One who makes all things new. He that "takes a Yoke upon him finds rest. He that "leaves all, gains a hundred times as much. So, "in the Old Testament, God said to *Abraham*, "*Sacrifice thy Son whom thou lovest, and thou shalt "all Nations be blessed in thy Seed.* In offering "*Isaac* he did not kill, but sanctify him. If "then thou art called upon to offer up thy "*Isaac*, thy Joy and Delight, be not afraid to "obey the Command. Whatsoever construc- "tion Nature may put upon the Matter, de- "pend upon the Promise. The Ram, and not "*Isaac* shall die; Thy true Joy shall not perish, "but thy depraved Affection; whose Horns "are entangled in the Thicket, and cannot "continue in thee without great Allay, and "much Anxiety. God proves thy Sincerity, "and thy Love for him, as he did *Abraham's*: "*Isaac* thy Spiritual Delight shall live; only "this must be bound upon the Wood, that "thou mayest Glory, not in thy own Flesh, "but in the Cross of thy Lord; by whom thou "art Crucified indeed, but *crucified to the*

"*World:*

" *World*: For unto God thou liveſt ſtill, and " liveſt much more truly than thou didſt before. And ſo much for the Second hindrance to Holy Reſolution.

CHAP. III.

The Third Obſtruction conſidered. Fear of Perſecution and Affliction.

FROM the Conſideration of that inward Peacefulneſs and mighty Satisfaction, which the former Chapter hath proved to be the Portion of the Godly, in Oppoſition to that Uneaſineſs falſely charged upon Virtue, by thoſe that are unacquainted with it; It is fit we now proceed to conſider the Afflictions of Good Men. For it is very poſſible, that Some, who are convinced of the pleaſurableneſs and true content of a Holy Converſation, ſo far as the practice of Religion it ſelf is concerned, may, yet think it hard to accept it with the Incumbrance of Perſecution, or Affliction; and eſteem themſelves, not excuſable only, but Men prudent and well adviſed, if they decline reſolving to live well, at ſuch times, and in ſuch Circumſtances, when they are certain to ſuffer for ſo doing. Now this Difficulty indeed is as mere a Pretence as either of the former; For, *Firſt*, it ſtands upon a falſe Bottom, and then, from that ſuppoſed Ground it draws a falſe Conſequence. The Ground it proceeds upon is this, That a Man may live virtuouſly and ſerve God very well, in ſome Caſes, and yet enjoy his Worldly Eaſe at the ſame time,

time, without any Moleſtation, or ſuffering at all. And this I call a falſe Ground, becauſe, though outward Perſecutions and Afflictions are limited to Times and Places, and more or leſs in ſome than in others, yet is there no Seaſon, no part of the World, in which Religious Men do not meet with ſome Contradiction and Trouble, both External and Internal. And, though the Comforts and Aſſiſtances they receive from God, are much more than a Counterballance to their Troubles, and even ſweeten their bittereſt Cup; yet are thoſe Troubles in themſelves both numerous and weighty, and ſuch they prove, when they fall with their full Force upon the Wicked and Impatient, who want the ſupports peculiar to the Godly. The Inference deduced from this Ground is likewiſe unjuſt. For it ſuppoſes Suffering to be a good Reaſon for declining the Service of God, whereas, in Truth, God ordains and makes uſe of This as a means of drawing us cloſer to Him, and weaning our Affections from the World. I ſhall therefore, for the ſetting this Matter in its true Light, branch out my preſent Diſcourſe into four Particulars. *Firſt*, I will enquire, whether it be uſual for all good Men, in order to Salvation, to ſuffer ſome kind of Trouble and Perſecution, that is, whether this be appointed by God, as an ordinary Inſtrument of bringing Men to perfect Holineſs here, and Happineſs hereafter. *Secondly*, I ſhall examine into the Reaſons, why God, who loves good Men ſo tenderly, does yet chooſe to exerciſe them after this manner. *Thirdly*, I ſhall ſhew, what Grounds of Comfort and Contentedneſs a good Man may have in the midſt of ſuch Troubles; and *Fourthly*, How ſuch Perſons

ſons ought to behave themſelves, when it ſhall pleaſe God to permit Afflictions to fall upon them. All which, taken together will, I doubt not give every unprejudiced Reader Satisfaction in this Point, and remove thoſe Scruples, which this Objection is apt to raiſe in his Mind.

Sect. I.

Whether Suffering be the Lot of all Good Men.

OF this, one would imagine, there ſhould need little Proof, after our Bleſſed Saviour hath ſo ſolemnly warned his Diſciples, and in Them all his faithful Servants, that *in the world they ſhall have Tribulation*; And accordingly, hath commanded them to *poſſeſs their Souls in patience*, that is, to provide for the bearing Adverſities with Conſtancy, and a firm Reſolution. St. *Paul* declares without Exception, that *all who will live godly in Chriſt Jeſus ſhall ſuffer perſecution.* And, that we *muſt through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God*, as if there were no other way to come at that Kingdom, but This. We are likewiſe told, that *whom God loveth he chaſteneth, and ſcourgeth every Son whom he receiveth*; Nay, the Matter is carried ſo far, as to make the Freedom from Troubles, a very ſuſpicious ſign, that we are not true Children: It is ſaid again, that *if we ſuffer with Chriſt we ſhall alſo reign with him*, as if the former were an indiſpenſable Condition of the latter; And, when *David*, in concurrence with all theſe Teſtimonies, obſerves, that *great are the troubles of the righteous*, we have reaſon from the whole to conclude, that Troubles are the diſtinguiſhing Character, which God's Beloved Children

John 16.
Luke 21.
2 Tim. 3.
Acts 14.
Heb. 12.
2 Tim. 2.
Pſal. 34.

Children are to be known and diſcerned by.

This Truth, though but little underſtood, and leſs conſidered, by the Men of the World, is implyed, and differently intimated to us, throughout the whole Courſe of the Scriptures.

Mat. 10. Thus our Saviour declares, *He came not to ſend*
2 Tim. 2. *Peace, but a Sword*, and St. *Paul*, that *no man can be crowned except he fight lawfully*, but all Fighting implies Oppoſition, and Difficulty, and an Enemy to grapple with. To the ſame
Rev. 2. purpoſe *the Hidden Manna*, (Heaven and its Joys) is ſaid to be reſerved for *Him that over-*
Mat. 8. *cometh*. The Ship, in which Chriſt and his Diſciples were overtaken with a Storm, hath ever been eſteem'd a lively Emblem, of thoſe Troubles and Afflictions, with which all that Embark with Him in the Service of God, are toſt upon the Waves of this Tempeſtuous World. Thus
Job 7. 14. again our Life is ſtyled a *Warfare upon Earth*, and *Man's days* ſaid to be *few and full of Miſery*. Of which that ſingle proof is Evidence ſufficient, that, ſince the Fall, God hath appointed the Pains of Death, as an unavoidable Paſſage to the Regions of Joy: And the infinite Contradictions and Troubles, both from within and without, bring the Truth of all the former Texts home to every Man's own Senſe and Experience. Within are the rebellious Motions of depraved Appetite, and thoſe ſtrugglings of the Mind, which keep up a perpetual Sedition in our Breaſts, and make them always the Seat of War. Without, we have the World and the Devil, ever aſſaulting us, by all manner of means; ſometimes flattering us with deceitful Promiſes; ſometimes terrifying us with angry Menaces; ſometimes playing the part of fair and open Enemies; at Others, betraying us in

the

the diſguiſe of treacherous Friends. And it is the Chriſtian's proper Buſineſs, to contend with all theſe manfully; for upon his Perſeverance and Victory depends the Crown of everlaſting Salvation.

That This in Fact hath always been ſo, the Examples of the moſt renowned Saints, from the beginning of the World, abundantly teſtify. Theſe all, as Partakers of Original Sin, were not only attacked perpetually by, from their own inward Corruptions, but from without, by great variety of Afflictions. Thus *Abel*, for his ſincere and acceptable Service of God, was murdered by his wicked Brother; and *Abraham*, the choſen of the Lord, was expoſed to many Hardſhips and Dangers. His Poſterity, who were God's peculiar, were *Abraham*'s Children in Affliction too; and the Blood of the Prophets from Age to Age, was ſhed on every ſide of *Jeruſalem*. The Sufferings of *Job* are very wonderful, and yet theſe came by God's ſpecial Appointment; notwithſtanding the Teſtimony himſelf gave of him, that he *was perfect and upright, and ſo juſt that there was none like him in all the Earth.* I might inſtance in *David*, and ſome others particularly, but that the Apoſtle's Account of the Saints under the Old Teſtament may very well ſerve for all; who tells us; *they were tortured, they were mocked, they were ſcourged, they were impriſoned, they were ſtoned, they were ſawn aſunder, were ſlain with the Sword, they wandred about in ſheep-ſkins, and goat-ſkins, being deſtitute, afflicted, tormented; they wandered about in deſarts, and mountains, and dens, and caves of the Earth*; and yet theſe are the Perſons, *of whom the world was not worthy.* And the reaſon why they were not delivered from

Gen. 4, 12, &c.

Job 1. 2.

from theſe Miſeries, was that their Reſurrection and future Reward might be the more glorious for enduring them. This was the Caſe of the beſt Men under the Old Teſtament.

The New is expreſly founded upon the Croſs. Heb. 2. The *Captain of our Salvation was made perfect through Sufferings*; and it *behoved him*, as himſelf Luke 24. affirms, to *endure many things, and ſo to enter into his Glory.* Since then our Lord hath told John 15. us, that *the Servant is not above his Maſter*, we have reaſon to conclude, that They, who partake of his Glory, muſt expect to bear a part in his Sufferings too. And thus it happened to his deareſt Friends. Of his Mother *Simeon*, pro- Luke 2. pheſied, that *a Sword ſhould pierce through her Soul.* And of the Apoſtles, we have undeniable proof, that their Labours and Sufferings, their Perſecutions and Neceſſities, were infinite; and to mere Fleſh and Blood inſupportable: After all which it pleaſed God to require their Blood to be ſpent in his Service. Thus not one of them died a Natural Death, St. *John* only excepted, and He came not behind the reſt in Sufferings, though his Life were preſerved by Miracle from thoſe that ſought it. Tertul. de præſcip. Hieron. contra Jovin. His Exile into *Patmos*, and his Caldron of ſcalding Oyl, abundantly made good the Prediction of our Lord concerning Him, and his Brother *James*, that they ſhould indeed *drink of the Cup* Matth. 20. *he drank of, and be baptized with the Baptiſm that he was baptized with.* But, why ſhould I inſiſt upon particular Examples, when Chriſt him- Luke 14. ſelf hath laid down this general Rule, that *if any man do not take up his Croſs and follow him, he cannot be his Diſciple?* Which plainly intimates that every Man will meet with Afflictions of his own, to exerciſe his Meekneſs and Patience;

and

and that the following his Leader, in theſe Virtues is the only method, by which Salvation can be had.

But here it may be urged, that the Matter cannot poſſibly be, as we have repreſented it. For, if no Man can be ſaved without Affliction and Tribulation; what then will become of all thoſe, who live in times of publick Peace and Proſperity, and in Places, where Religion is ſo far from being perſecuted, that the Civil Sanctions do their utmoſt to encourage and promote it? To this I anſwer, *Firſt*, That allowing there ſhould be any ſuch time and place, where the practice of Goodneſs meets with no Oppoſition or Diſturbance from without; yet the Perſons who live in it are but in ſo much greater Danger. The effects of Proſperity deſcribed by the Prophet upon wicked Men; having too frequent and natural Influence even upon otherwiſe virtuous Diſpoſitions. That *when people are not plagued like their Neighbours, nor come into any misfortune like other Men, Pride uſually compaſſes them about as a Chain, and violence covers them as a Garment. Their Eyes ſwell with fatneſs, and they follow the luſts of their own Heart.* So that their Virtue in ſuch Circumſtances runs a much greater Hazard, than it would in a ſeaſon of Diſtreſs. But my *Second* anſwer is, that there never was, nor will be any time, ſo void of Troubles as not to furniſh a Croſs, for thoſe Diſciples of Chriſt, who are content to take it up. Are there not always Poverty, or Sickneſs, or Calumny, or Spight, or Injuries, or Contradictions, or ſome other Evil of this kind offered to good Men continually? Do there ever want ſuch ill-diſpoſed Wretches as the *Pſalmiſt* complains of, who Pſal. 73.

who render peaceable and virtuous People, Pſal. 109. *Evil for Good, and Hatred for their Goodwill?* Are we not always peſtered even with Foes of our own Houſhold, Kindred, or Acquaintance, that obſtruct our beſt Deſigns, and draw us off, or cool us at leaſt, when we ſet our ſelves moſt zealouſly to the Service of Almighty God? But, if there were none of all theſe, yet is any Man exempted from diſorderly Affections, the moſt dangerous Enemies of all the reſt, and ſuch, as it is not poſſible to have any Truce with? Is there a Day, an Hour, an Inſtant, when ſome Temptation or other, of the World, or the Devil, is not making attempts upon us: Attempts which it is much more difficult to ſecure our ſelves from in times of Peace and Wealth, than in the ſoreſt Adverſity, or hotteſt Perſecution? For the Fable of the Sun and the Wind give us a very juſt Repreſentation of all Mankind; many more whereof periſh by Flattery, than by Force. We ſee how gallantly *David* acquitted himſelf againſt the moſt furious Aſſaults of Adverſity, and yet how infamouſly he was Baffled in a proſperous Condition. So that there needs no publick Calamities, to render the good Man's Life a State of Tribulation; his Virtues will be obſtructed and reſiſted more than enough, without being openly, Perſecuted; and the profoundeſt Peace abroad will not put an end to that perpetual War he hath to wage at home. When outward Oppoſition ceaſes, the inward is left ſtill, and often grows more furious, and more troubleſome upon theſe Occaſions, So that Afflictions and Croſſes will conſtantly await us; And the *Firſt* point is evident, which aſſerts theſe, to be the lot of every Diſciple of Chriſt Jeſus.

SECT.

SECT. III.

The Reaſons, for which God, notwithſtanding his Love for Good Men, ſuffers them to be thus afflicted.

NOW here, it ought to be a ſufficient Satisfaction to us, that Almighty God, in his infinite Wiſdom, hath thought fit thus to order the Matter. For we may be ſure, that whatever Expedients he pitches upon, they are always the moſt proper for the Purpoſes he intends them to ſerve. And ſince he hath given us the Hope and Proſpect of ſo excellent and glorious a Reward, it is but reaſonable, that our ſhort Labours and Sufferings in this preſent State, ſhould prove us worthy of his Favour, and the ineſtimable Benefits prepared for us hereafter. But we need not reſt here; For God hath not only declared to us his Will, but ſeveral weighty Reaſons, which determin him to it. And therefore, for our farther encouragement, I ſhall here mention ſome, which may abundantly convince Men of his Fatherly Care and Goodneſs, even toward thoſe, who are moſt grievouſly afflicted, during their paſſage through this Valley of Tears.

1. And *Firſt*, This Diſpenſation is therefore highly reaſonable, becauſe it increaſes our Virtue in this Life, and by conſequence our Glory in the next; The meaſure whereof depends upon the Degree of our Deſert here. For his Juſtice and Wiſdom having determined, that none ſhall be crowned but they who fight; the ſharper thoſe combats are, in which, by the aſſiſtance of his Grace, we come off Conquerours,

the brighter will be that Crown laid up for us at the Reſurrection of the Juſt. This is St. *Paul*'s meaning, when he ſpeaks of ſome, who would
Heb. 11. *not accept Deliverance, that they might obtain a better Reſurrection.* And our bleſſed Lord's, in pronouncing thoſe *Happy, who are perſecuted for Righ-*
Mat. 5. 10, 11, 12. *teouſneſs ſake, becauſe theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.* And again, *Bleſſed are ye, when Men ſhall revile you, and perſecute you, and ſpeak all manner of Evil againſt you falſly, for my Name's ſake; Rejoyce and be exceeding glad, for great is your Reward in Heaven.* This is the true importance,
Mat. 16. 19. of *ſaving our Life by loſing it*, and *receiving an Hundred Fold*, for all the Advantages his Diſciples had quitted upon his account. Hence are thoſe Promiſes to voluntary Poverty, and renouncing our own Will, in obedience to Chriſt's: All which are great Conflicts againſt the World, and our own ſenſual Inclinations; And cannot be performed, without much Suffering, and very ſenſible Affliction. In a word, This Argument is the ſubſtance of that Text in
2 Cor. 4. 17. St. *Paul*, that *theſe light Afflictions, which are but for a Moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory.*

2. Another Reaſon for this diſpenſation is, to draw us, by this Means, from the Love of the World, which, as St. *James* obſerves, is
Jam. 4. *Enmity with God.* He weans us by embittering our Delights, and uſes the ſame Method of calling us to himſelf, which Providence did to
Luke 15. the Prodigal Son, who entertained no Thoughts of returning to his Father, and his Duty, till Famine and Want had reduced him to feed upon Husks with Swine.

3. *Thirdly*, Affliction is a moſt admirable Medicine, for healing our Spiritual Diſeaſes, and re-

reſtoring thoſe to Health, whom gentler Applications would have no effectual Operation upon. This opens our Eyes, and works off thoſe Scales of Spiritual Blindneſs, contracted by long Eaſe, and uninterrupted Proſperity. Thus the Scripture takes notice that *the Rod and Reproof give Wiſdom*, And furniſhes us with many Examples to this purpoſe. It is a moſt remarkable paſſage concerning *Joſeph's* Brethren; Who ſeem to have made no Reflections upon their Barbarity to him for many Years together, till Famine, and their rough Treatment in *Egypt*, awakened them into remorſe; and upon this Occaſion they preſently fall to accuſing themſelves, and acknowledge the Juſtice of Providence in avenging this unnatural Offence at the diſtance of many Years; Then *they ſaid one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our Brother, in that we ſaw the anguiſh of his Soul, when he beſought us and we would not hear; therefore is this diſtreſs come upon us.* And as Tribulation enlightens us, and brings us to a ſight of our faults; ſo is it a great healp to the removing and curing them. This Rod is like that which *Moſes* ſmote the Rock with; It ſoftens our ſtony Hearts, and makes the Tears of Repentance guſh out in great Abundance. Hence we find it compared to a File, that ſcours off the Ruſt of the Soul; to a ſharp Remedy, that cleanſes Wounds from Corruption; to Fire, that purges the Gold from its Droſs: For ſuch, in effect, are Pride, and Vainglory, Anger and Sloth, Effeminacy, and Luxury, and a Thouſand more, which Proſperity contracts, but the Furnace of Afflictions throughly purges away.

Prov. 29.

Gen. 42. 21.

Job 23. 10.

Prov. 20. 30.

Iſa. 1. 25.

Jer. 9. 7.

Zech. 13. 9.

4. As Tribulation is a very excellent Remedy to take away the Guilt and malignity of Sins

paſt; So is it likewiſe an admirable Preſervative againſt contracting the like Guilt in time to come. It makes Men ſenſible whom they have offended, how dangerous it is to provoke the Anger of God, how fearful a Thing to fall into his Hands. And conſequently, it makes them watchful and wary in their Behaviour, and careful of ever ſtep they take. This Pſal. 119. *David* confirms by his own Experience, *It is Good for me to have been afflicted, that I might learn thy Statutes. Before I was troubled I went wrong, but now have I kept thy Law.*

5. And this leads us to another very kind Reaſon, which moves Almighty God to deal after this manner with his choſen, and very dear Children; that ſo by chaſtiſing their Sins in this Life, and drawing them to Amendment by his Severity, and the Warning taken upon it, they may eſcape the infinitely more dreadful Puniſhments of another State. This is expreſly the Account rendred by St. *Paul* of ſome temporal Afflictions, which fell upon the Church at *Corinth*; 1 Cor. 11. 32. *When we are judged, we are chaſtened of the Lord, that we ſhould not be condemned with the World.*

6. A Sixth Motive to this Courſe is, that God by Affliction may try his Servants, and bring their Sincerity to the Proof; that ſo themſelves and others may be made ſenſible, out of what Principle they ſerve God, and how faithful, or how fickle, their Virtue is. This was directly the Caſe of *Abraham*, Gen. 22. to whom God gave that harſh Command of ſacrificing his Son, as a Teſt of his Faith; and to ſee, whether any thing though never ſo dear, would ſtand in competition with his Love, and obedience to his God. The ſame account *Moſes* gives of the

long

long ſojourning of the *Iſraelites*, before they were admitted to the Land of Promiſe. *The Lord thy God led thee theſe Forty Years in the Wilderneſs, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thy Heart, whether thou wouldſt keep his Commandments or no.* Deut. 8. 2. And again, with regard to his permitting the Seducements of falſe Prophets, The *Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye Love the Lord your God with all your Heart, and with all your Soul:* Deut. 13. 3. And in like manner, God is ſaid *to have left Hezekiah* for a Seaſon, *to try him, that he might know all that was in his Heart.* 2 Chro. 32. 31. Thus *David, Thou O God haſt proved us, thou haſt tryed us, as Silver is tryed: Thou broughteſt us into the Snare, and laidſt Trouble upon our Loyns.* Pſal. 66. 10. And how well he was contented with this ſort of Proof, appears from his praying in another place, that God would *examin and prove him, ſearch out his Reins and his Heart*, to ſee whether he were ſtanch and ſound at the bottom, and would ſtick to him in Adverſity or not. Pſal. 24. 2. This was one great End of *Job's* Affliction, and is indeed that which makes wonderful Diſcoveries; There being (as our Lord obſerves in the Parable of the Sower) many a Specious Virtue, that carries a good Face, and yet in time of Temptation, falls away. Luk 8. 7.

7. A Seventh Reaſon for afflicting Virtuous and Holy Men is, to ſhew them their abſolute dependance upon God, and drive them to ſeek Comfort and Succour from him, where alone they can be had. And this is a very uſual and a very natural Effect of Trouble, *in their affliction they will ſeek me early*, ſays he by his Prophet. Hoſ. 5. 15. And ſo *David*, in great Charity, prays for his Enemies, *Make their Faces aſhamed O Lord, that they may ſeek thy Name.* Pſal 83. 1. For can there be a ſhrewd-

er Sign of Men's being utterly loſt, and given up to a Reprobate Senſe, than their not being drawn with theſe Cords of Affliction: of which we find lamentable Complaints in the Prophet *Jeremy*, *In vain have I ſmitten your Children, they* Jer. 2 30. *received no Correction*: And again, *Thou haſt ſtricken them; but they have not grieved; thou haſt con-* v. 2, 5. *ſumed them, but they have refuſed to receive Correction; they have made their Faces harder than a Rock, they have refuſed to return; they have altogether broken the Yoke, and burſt the Bands.* Intimating that this was the laſt Experiment, that could be made upon them; and if this made no Impreſſion, they muſt be given over for impenetrable, incorrigible, Wretches.

8. Another account of God's afflicting his Servants may be the gaining an opportunity of more viſibly exerting his Power and Goodneſs, in their deliverance. For, as among Men, a Noble Mind covets nothing more earneſtly, than ſome very eminent Occaſion of teſtifying the Kindneſs he profeſſes to his Friend, and at once to evidence both his Ability, and Inclination, to do him Service; ſo God Almighty, who hath all Events in his own diſpoſal, and whoſe Goodneſs infinitely excells that of the moſt generous and affectionate Friend, orders Matters ſo, as to make the Diſtreſſes of his Servants ſerviceable to the exerciſe of this beneficent Diſpoſition. Such were the Teſtimonies he gave to the Dan 3. & 6. *Three Children* in the fiery Furnace; to *Daniel* Gen. 39. in the Den of Lions; to *Joſeph* in the Dungeon, Job 42. and to *Job*, in the extremity of his Miſery. And therefore did Chriſt, not only ſuffer the Ship, in which he ſailed with his Diſciples, to be overtaken with a Storm, but ſlept till it was even covered with the Waves; that is, deferred his

Aſſiſtance, till they were reduced to the very laſt Gaſp. Thus again did he permit St. *Peter* to ſink, when attempting to walk upon the Sea; That, the more imminent the Danger was, the more conſpicuous his Power and Goodneſs, might be, which ſo ſeaſonably, and yet ſo effectually, reſcued them out of it. Mat. 8. & 14.

Strong Impreſſions are not left upon our Hearts, except when ſome very ſenſible and great Change is wrought in our Affairs; and our Joys for eſcapes always hold proportion, with the Fears and the Calamities we are delivered from. Reſt to a Labourer is grateful, according as he is weary with Toil; and a Calm Sea infinitely more pleaſant after a Tempeſt: Hence our Saviour ſuſtains his Diſciples, with a promiſe, that their *Sorrow ſhall be turned into Joy*; and *David* magnifies the Comforts of God's ſupport, by ſaying, that this *was preſent with him in the Vale of the Shadow of Death*; and, *I will be glad and rejoyce in thy Mercy, for thou haſt conſidered my Trouble, and haſt known my Soul in Adverſities.* It is therefore a Mercy to afflict us, becauſe this adds to our Joy, and renders our Senſe of God's Goodneſs, and our own Satisfaction in the eſcape, much more delightful, than it could poſſibly have been, if we had never ſmarted and grieved at all. Joh. 16. 23. Pſal. 23. & 30.

It likewiſe diſpoſes us more to Thankfulneſs, and to proclaim this Goodneſs of our Heavenly Father more eagerly, more publickly, after that Holy Man's Example, *I will ſing of thy Power, yea I will ſing aloud of thy Mercy in the Morning, becauſe thou haſt been my Defence and Refuge in the Day of my Trouble. Unto thee, O my Strength will I ſing! for God is my Defence, and the God of my Mercy.* Accordingly we find, that moſt of Pſal 59. 16, 17.

thoſe noble and Affectionate Hymns of Praiſe, were compoſed upon occaſion of ſome eminent Deliverance: This tuned the Harps of *Moſes*, and *Deborah*, and *Hannah*, and *David*, and *Hezekiah*, and others, who all mingle the tendereſt Remembrances of their paſt Afflictions, with the acknowledgment of their preſent Bleſſings. And, as God's Glory is thus publiſhed by our Praiſes, ſo this is one of the great Ends, by which he deſigns the advancement of his Honour; and a Tribute required from us; *Call upon me*, ſays he, *in the Day of Trouble, ſo will I hear thee, and thou ſhalt praiſe me*: And again in the ſame Pſalm, *Whoſo offereth me Thanks and Praiſe, he it is that honoureth me.*

Pſal. 50. 15, v. 23.

Farther yet. By Perſecution and Affliction, and the experience of his Goodneſs under them, God deſigns to confirm and embolden us, in his Service; That we may be encouraged to conſtancy in our Obedience, and not diſmayed or terrified in difficulties; when we reflect, how powerful and preſent a Helper and Protector we have, in all that we call upon him for. And this Reaſon moves him ſometimes, not only to inflict, but to lengthen our Sufferings: It being natural for Time and Cuſtom to render Things, that were very terrible at firſt, very ſupportable, and by degrees familiar to us. Till this be done, our Troubles have not anſwered their End. And therefore it is obſervable, that St. *Peter* does not pray for an immediate and ſpeedy Deliverance of the Perſons he writes to; but, that God would give it when he had firſt fitted them to receive it to their true Advantage; *The God of all Grace*, ſays he, *who hath called us into his eternal Glory, by Chriſt Jeſus, after that ye have ſuffered a while, make you perfect, ſtabliſh, ſtrengthen, ſettle you.*

1 Pet. 5. 10.

And

And this indeed is the peculiar excellence of Affliction, that it contributes greatly to the Exerciſe and Increaſe of all thoſe Virtues and Graces, wherein Chriſtian Perfection conſiſts. It ſtrengthens our *Faith*, by awakening us into a Conſideration of the wiſe Reaſons, why God permits theſe Hardſhips, and preſenting to us the precious Promiſes of his preſent Aſſiſtance, and our future Reward. It confirms our *Hope*, by the Experience of his Power and Goodneſs; and puts *David's* Song into our Mouths, *God is our Refuge and Strength, a very preſent help in Trouble; Therefore will we not fear, though the Earth be moved, and though the Hills be carried into the midſt of the Sea*, &c. Pſal. 46. And, which is yet of more valuable conſideration; It aſſures us, that God will not forget our labour of Love, but that they, who ſuffer with him, ſhall moſt certainly reign with him. Thus lifting us above the World and all that it can do to us, while fixing our Eyes upon Objects certain, though Diſtant and Eternal; it exerciſes and enflames our *Charity*, by reviving in us the Remembrance and the Love of Chriſt, while conforming us to his Example, and rendring us highly contented to ſuffer for His ſake, who condeſcended to endure infinitely more for Ours. It teaches us Prudence and Diſcretion in our Behaviour, Temperance and Moderation in our Paſſions and Deſires, and moſt lawful Enjoyments: Fortitude in bearing and being inured to Difficulties; It promotes Repentance and Sorrow for Sin, by making us ſick of that bitter Root whence all our Sufferings ſpring: It brings down our haughty Spirits, and inſpires Humility, and Meekneſs, and Patience; In a word, it reſembles us to the Captain of our Salvation,

vation, and sets us in the Way he trod before us, whose Character was, *A Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with Grief*: and so makes us *Crucified Christians*, the best Estate, and most honourable Title, which a State of Mortality can aspire to: mortified to the Vanities of the World and the Flesh, but purified and exalted in our Spirits, and full of vigorous Virtue, eager Zeal, and ardent Devotion.

Isa. 53.

These are some of the Reasons, why God thinks fit to afflict his dearest Children, why he pronounces *a Blessing upon them that Mourn*; and such as manifestly shew us, how infinitely the World is mistaken, in looking upon temporal Sufferings, as the greatest Miseries, and certain Marks of the Divine Displeasure. O! how unthankfully do those Men deal with God, who repine at their Happiness, and undergo with Indignation and Murmuring these very dispensations of his gracious Providence, which ought rather to be received; With contentedness shall I say? nay, not only so, but even with Joy and Thanksgiving? But of this we shall, I hope, be more effectually convinced, when I have spoken to the Third Branch of this Argument, to which this last Reason assigned for God's afflicting Holy Men, very naturally leads me.

SECT. III.

What Grounds of Comfort Good Men may have in their Troubles.

NOW here I find my self prevented, and that the former Section is in effect an Anticipation of this through every part of it. For, if

if God send Afflictions upon Good Men, with ſuch kind Intentions, as by their preſent Sufferings to increaſe their future Glory, to keep them clear of being infected by the bewitching Corruptions of the World, to open the Eyes of their Underſtanding, to cure their paſt Diſeaſes; and to be an Antidote againſt contracting New; to prevent heavier Miſeries in the other World; to try and illuſtrate their Virtue; to bring them cloſer to himſelf in Love and Holy Truſt; to render his Mercy more conſpicuous, and their Joy more tranſporting, by a more eminent Deliverance; to miniſter Occaſions for the Exerciſe of all Chriſtian Graces, and to conform them to the Image of his own Son, and their deareſt Saviour; Who can be diſcontented at this, except ſuch, as are either ſo blind, or ſo perverſe, to be Enemies to their own Happineſs? How many nauſeous Medicines, how many painful Applications, do we willingly ſubmit to, for the preſervation of theſe vile Bodies, and the lengthening out a Life, ſcarce worth our keeping, were it not in order to a better? And, ſhall we repine at unpalatable Remedies, for the healing of our Souls, and the ſecuring of a Bliſsful and Eternal Life? But eſpecially, ſhall we think much to travel to Heaven, in the ſame Path which our Lord hath beaten out for us? to bear in our Bodies thoſe Marks of the Bleſſed Jeſus, which ſhew that we retain to him? The greateſt Subjects eſteem it an Honour to carry about thoſe Badges which diſtinguiſh them, as Officers in the Court and Family of their Prince: Our Priviledge is greater, for we wear the very Robe and Crown of our Spiritual King; and are advanced to his Throne by the ſame Methods, by which himſelf

ſelf aſcended to it. And how ought we to accept, how ſhould we prize this Dignity?

But ſtill, there are ſome other Conſiderations behind, which may more than reconcile, may indeed make us in Love with theſe Diſpenſations to us. As *Firſt*, If we reflect, that none of theſe things happen to us by Blind Chance or any fatal Neceſſity, but by the ſpecial Providence, and particular Diſpoſition of Almighty God. 'Twas thus our Lord confirmed himſelf in his own Reſolutions, to ſuffer; with ſome degree of Indignation rebuking the too forward Zeal of a Diſciple, attempting his Reſcue, *The Cup which my Father hath given me, ſhall I not drink it?* Now the ſame Hand, that tempered that Cup for Chriſt, tempers ours too. He mixes it with the ſame Affection, and the ſame kind Intentions; The promoting our Good, and his own Glory. He Adminiſters the bitter Potion with ſuch care, that, whatever Danger it may ſeem to threaten, not one Hair of our Head ſhall periſh by it. Nay, he never fails to qualify us for the kindly Operation, and makes it a Teſtimony of his Faithfulneſs, *not to ſuffer us to be tempted above that we are able, but with the Temptation alſo makes a way to eſcape, that we may be able to bear it.* This undoubtedly is matter of mighty Conſolation, and what it will become us always to have a very thankful remembrance of.

Joh. 18.2.

1 Cor. 10. 13.

2. Again, We ſhall do well to conſider, that Chriſt being now inveſted with the Power of governing the World, theſe Events are all ordered by one, whoſe Experience hath taught him, what it is to ſuffer. One, who hath born himſelf, and ſo is intimately acquainted with the natural Infirmities of Fleſh and Blood, and

con-

conſiders what our Conſtitution can bear. For *in that he hath ſuffered himſelf being tempted*, he cannot but be touched with a feeling of our Weakneſs, and will not fail to Succour, and to proportion his Tryals to the Capacity of *them that are tempted.* As the Apoſtle excellently argues in the ſecond, fourth and fifth Chapters to the *Hebrews.*

3. But no Reflection is more ſupporting than This, that theſe very Sufferings are deſigned for Proofs of his Affection. The Croſs which Men have naturally ſo ſtrong an averſion to, is a choice Treaſure, reſerved for his particular Friends. Diſtributed, not equally and promiſcuouſly, but in ſuch a Meaſure, as is correſpondent to the Kindneſs he hath for each of thoſe Perſons, to whom it is imparted. Thus, when St. *Paul* is called a *Choſen Veſſel*, the Evidence of this being ſuch is expres'd in the next Words, For, *I will ſhew him how great things he muſt ſuffer for my names ſake.* Act. 9.16. And St. *Peter* declares his Notion of this Matter, when he ſays, *If you be reproached for the name of Chriſt, happy are ye, for the Spirit of Glory, and of God, reſteth upon you.* 1 Pet. 4. 14. Thus He, and St. *John*, after their being ſcourged, *went away from the preſence of the Council, rejoycing that they were counted worthy, to ſuffer ſhame for his Name.* Act. 5.41. And St. *Paul*, after an aſſurance, that *the Grace of God ſhould be made perfect in his weakneſs*, begins his ſong of Triumph, *Therefore I take pleaſure in reproaches, in neceſſities, in perſecutions, in diſtreſſes for Chriſt's ſake; for when I am weak, then am I ſtrong.* 2 Cor. 12. 9, 10. And accordingly here preſents it to the *Philippians*, as a particular Favour and Privilege, *Unto you it is given in the behalf of Chriſt, not only to believe in him, but alſo to ſuffer for his ſake: Having the ſame conflict, which ye ſaw in me, and now hear to be in me.* Phil. 1, 29, 30. From

4. From hence then, We are warranted to draw this *Fourth* Inference for our Comfort, That, when Tribulation is ſent upon us, and attended with Grace to bear it patiently, This is a Token of God's appointing us to Bliſs, and Glory everlaſting with himſelf. As on the contrary, to go on in uninterrupted Proſperity, is a very ſuſpicious ſign of God's having given over his kind Intentions toward us. Thus much is not only inſinuated by the Texts already alledged, but induſtriouſly argued in the *Twelfth* to the *Hebrews*. To the ſame purpoſe our Lord himſelf, *Bleſſed are ye that weep now, for ye ſhall laugh. But wo unto you that are rich, for ye have received your conſolation. Wo unto you that are full, for ye ſhall hunger. Wo unto you that laugh now, for ye ſhall mourn and weep.* And that anſwer of *Abraham* to the rich Man in Hell, *Son remember, that thou in thy life time receiveſt thy good things, and likewiſe* Lazarus *evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.*

Luke 6.

Luke 16. 25.

Not that any of theſe Paſſages are ſo to be underſtood, as if Wealth or Proſperity were in their own Nature the cauſe of any Man's Damnation; but becauſe they are great Snares, and exceeding apt to betray Men into dangerous and deſtructive Courſes. And ſince every Man hath multitudes of Sins, which deſerve to be puniſhed, and ſome good Diſpoſitions, which God thinks fit to reward; It is better, if his holy Will be ſo, that our Puniſhment ſhould be in this World, and our Reward in the next; than that our Reward ſhould be here, and our Puniſhment hereafter. And ſince ſome Meaſure of each will fall to every Man's ſhare, the not being Afflicted is a fatal Symptom of evil things awaiting ſuch Perſons in the Life to come.

Thus

Thus, as St. *Gregory* expreſſes it, the Oxen marked out for ſlaughter are turned looſe into pleaſant Paſtures, and range and feed at Pleaſure; but Thoſe deſigned for uſe are kept up, and daily brought under the Yoke.

5. A *fifth* Conſolation is the extraordinary Favour and Preſence of Almighty God with his diſtreſſed Servants, as himſelf ſays, *I am with him in Trouble.* Inſtances whereof we have in *Joſeph* while a Priſoner, and yet more remarkably in the Three Children; with whom *Nebuchadnezzar* ſaw a fourth Perſon walking in the midſt of the Furnace, whoſe Form was like the Son of God. And could Men's Eyes be opened, like thoſe of *Eliſha*'s Servant, they would ſee ſuch bright Guards of Heavenly Powers ſet round about them, as could not but fill their Hearts with Courage and Comfort. But what the Eye cannot ſee, the Soul feels. Though we cannot diſcern thoſe Protectors, which pitch their Tents round about us, and undertake our Defence, by the Orders of that Lord of Hoſts, who aſſigns them all their Stations; yet we can find the Effect, and have the aſſurance of God's Grace, in the midſt of our Tribulation. Hence it was, that St. *Paul declared himſelf ſtrong, when he was weak*, becauſe he found the Powers of Divine Grace riſe in proportion to his Preſſures. And this agrees exactly well with that Account given of himſelf in the ſame Epiſtle: *We are troubled on every ſide, but not diſmayed; we are perplexed, but not in deſpair. Perſecuted, but not forſaken; caſt down, but not deſtroyed.* And What an advantage, What a ſupport is this, to conſider, that in the utmoſt Perils, nay even in Death it ſelf, they have an Almighty Friend to ſtand by them, and carry them

Pſal. 91.

Dan. 3.

2 Cor. 4, 8, &c.

them through; for (as St. *Auguſtine* moſt truly obſerves) *God never forſakes any Man, who does not firſt forſake Him.*

Ser. 88 Tedemp.

To all this we may add the Expectation of a glorious Recompence, and the ſhortneſs of our preſent Sufferings. Both which St. *Paul* hath put together, when he ſaid, *Our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory.* And our Lord in like manner. *Behold I come quickly, and my Reward is with me.* He will haſten to our Relief, and to put an end to our Troubles; And, when he does come, he will not come empty-handed; If then the Load be heavy, yet let us conſider, we have not far to carry it; And we are ſure to be nobly paid for our Pains; and that therefore we ſhould ſtrain hard, rather than loſe ſuch large Wages for ſo little Labour. And what can we deſire more? Our Lord comforts us under Affliction, he enables us to hold it out, he takes care of the main Chance for us, and after refreſhing us with his gracious Preſence, he is preparing to wipe away all our Tears, and to place us in the perefect Tranquility of his Bleſſed Kingdom. Methinks we might even now be perſwaded, but if we do not yet, our own Experience will one day make it evident beyond all Contradictions, that upon Theſe, and ſeveral Other, accounts, *The Sufferings of this preſent time are not worthy to be compared with that Glory, which ſhall be revealed in us.*

2 Cor. 4. 17.

Rev. 22. 12.

Rom. 8. 18.

Sect.

SECT. IV.

How Men ought to behave themſelves under Affliction.

THey, who duly attend to the Three Conſiderations, which went before, cannot be much at a loſs for Information in this Fourth. Nothing being more obvious than, that every Man is obliged ſo to demean himſelf under Affliction, as may beſt expreſs the Submiſſion of our Will to That of God, and anſwer all thoſe excellent purpoſes, which He deſigns our Suffering ſhould produce in us. But however, as I have done in the foregoing particulars, ſo will I in This, obſerve three or four Things, which pious and prudent Men adviſe, and ſuch as all who are reduced to diſtreſſed Circumſtances, will find it highly expedient to remember upon this Occaſion.

1. Now it muſt be acknowledged in the *Firſt* place, that We ſhould all aſpire after that Perfection of a reſigned and heavenly Mind, intended by our Bleſſed Saviour, when he bids his Diſciples, *Rejoyce and be exceeding glad*, for thoſe very Reproaches, and Perſecutions, and other bodily Sufferings, which the common Chriſtian finds it ſo hard a matter to digeſt. But, if Nature, and the regard for this World be ſtill ſo ſtrong; if Fleſh and Blood be ſo heavy that we cannot ſoar thus high; at leaſt our Underſtandings ſhould not be debauched, if our Wills be captivated. We ſhould inwardly and truly aſſent to the Reaſonableneſs of the Apoſtle's Precept of *counting it juſt matter of joy, when we fall into divers temptations*, and ſo re- Luke 6. 22. Jam. 1. 2.

prove and condemn, and lament, the Carnality of our own Hearts, which cannot reach to that Excellence in Practice, which in Speculation and Judgment, we cannot but allow and commend. But if we are not able to reaſon our ſelves into this Opinion neither, the leaſt we can poſſibly ſuppoſe our Duty, and that, wherein they that fail are left utterly without excuſe, is to *poſſeſs our Souls in Patience*; to take what God lays upon us without any impious Repinings at Providence, or unbecoming Reflections upon the Juſtice, or Goodneſs of him, whoſe Wiſdom diſpoſes all Events; to lye down under his Rod, meekly and decently, without which it is impoſſible theſe Chaſtiſements ſhould ever turn to good Account. For (ſays the Apoſtle) *ye have need of Patience, that after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promiſe.* Heb. 10. 36.

2. *Secondly*, We muſt do in our Diſtreſſes, as the Diſciples did in theirs, when the Storm grew furious, apply to Chriſt for help. He is with Us too, but as then, ſo often ſince, *he is aſleep*, and therefore we muſt continue calling, till we have awakened him: So did the Holy *Pſalmiſt* heretofore, *Up Lord, why ſleepeſt thou? awake, and be not abſent from us for ever: Wherefore hideſt thou thy face, and forgetteſt our miſery and trouble?* Pſal. 44, 23, 24. This importunity, provided it proceed, from a true Affection, and juſt Dependence upon his Care and Help, is exceedingly well-pleaſing to him. A moſt admirable Pattern, whereof we have in that moſt pathetical Addreſs of *Iſaiah*, *Look down, O Lord, from heaven, and behold from the habitation of thy Holineſs, and of thy Glory: Where is thy zeal, and thy ſtrength, the ſounding of thy Bowels, and of thy mercies toward us? Are they reſtrained? Doubt-* Iſa. 63, 15, 16.

leſs

leſs thou art our Father, though Abraham *be ignorant of us, and* Iſrael *acknowledge us not: Thou, O Lord art our Father, our Redeemer, thy Name is from everlaſting.* Thus then we muſt flee to God for Succour; pour out our Hearts before him; ſhew him of all our Trouble; expoſtulate the Caſe with him in affectionate, earneſt, devout and continual Prayer; Remembring always the Succeſs, which our Saviour declares ſhall attend our Perſeverance. And that, if Men, who are frequently vanquiſhed by importunity, even when Friendſhip fails to move them, will give themſelves ſome Trouble, rather than ſend ſuch a Suitor away empty; God, who can with eaſe, and whoſe Kindneſs always diſpoſes him to, relieve us, will not fail to grant us thoſe Mercies, which are for our Advantage, provided we perſiſt in asking, and do not caſt away our Confidence in his Goodneſs and Power. Luke 11.

But here we muſt take one thing to be ſure along with us, which is, that Chriſt ſuffered the Ship to be almoſt covered with Waves, before he would awake; Intimating thereby that the meaſure, and the length, of our Tryals muſt be left to his diſcretion. We muſt not be provoked to Impatience; nor pronounce raſhly upon his Dealings with us; nor diſtruſt his Ability, or his Inclination to help. It is not for Us to enquire, why God does This, or ſuffers That; nor how long he will permit the Burden to lye upon us. Known unto him are all his Ways; and Wiſe and Gracious is every diſpenſation of his Providence; and He often ſends Tribulation in large Meaſures, and gives *plenteouſneſs of tears to drink*, that his Power may be the more conſpicuous in our Relief, and our

Joy and Recompence great, in proportion to our Tryals; and that he may prove our Integrity and ſearch us to the very Bottom. Matters were gone very far with *Elijah*, when he fled into a Mountain, and was deſtitute of all Humane help, and deſired not to live any longer: And with *David*, when he gave all for loſt, and complained that he was utterly *caſt out of God's ſight*; and with St. *Paul* when he *had the ſentence of Death in himſelf*; but never ſo far with any, as with his own dear Son, when, in the anguiſh of his Soul, he uttered that doleful Lamentation upon the Croſs, *My God, My God, why haſt thou forſaken me?* And Who can in Juſtice think himſelf hardly dealt with, when he conſiders, that God ſaw fit to reduce the Innocent Jeſus, the Son of his Love, to ſuch ſad Extremities?

1 Kings 19.

Pſal. 31.

2 Cor. 1.

Mat. 27.

3. From hence then we may infer a *Third* Duty, which is, Magnanimity and Conſtancy under our Afflictions; grounded upon a ſtrong impregnable Faith in God's Aſſiſtance under, and final Deliverance out of them, in his own due time, how ſevere and terrible ſoever the Storm may be upon us in the mean while. The Diſciples did not cry out *We periſh*, till the Ship was in all appearance ready to be ſwallowed up; and yet Chriſt upbraids them for want of Faith. St. *Peter* did not expreſs any fear, till he was juſt ſinking, and even then the anſwer is, *O thou of little faith, wherefore didſt thou doubt?* God can never be at a loſs, but hath many wonderful Methods in reſerve, unknown to us, for our Comfort and Deliverances.

Mat. 8.

Mat. 14.

4. In confidence of theſe St. *Paul* pronounces himſelf able to *do all things, through Chriſt that ſtrengthened him*; and *David* makes thoſe noble Declara-

Phil. 4.

Declarations, *I will not be afraid for ten thou-* Pſal 3,
ſands of the People, that have ſet themſelves againſt 23, 5c.
me round about; and *though I walk in the midſt of the ſhadow of Death, yet will I not be afraid; God is on my ſide, I will not fear what fleſh can do unto me.* Theſe are the Profeſſions of a Man, who had drunk deep of Afflictions, and ſpoke from his own Experience: And the Affection of Mind, expres'd in them, is what Chriſt hath expreſly enjoyned. *I ſay, unto you, my Friends,* Luke 12.
be not afraid of them which kill the Body, and after that have no more that they can do. Nay, St. *Peter* goeth higher yet, and forbids us ſo much as *to be troubled*, or driven to any manner of Con- 1 Per. 3.
fuſion, when we are called to ſuffer for God and 14.
a good Cauſe. The Rewards promiſed to the Saints are confined to Them that conquer, and are Faithful; and the *Fearful* and *Unbeliev-* Rev. 2.
ing are appointed their Portion *in the Lake which* & 21. 8.
burneth with Fire and Brimſtone:

5. From hence there muſt, and naturally will, proceed another Virtue, abſolutely neceſſary in the Day of Tryal; A firm Reſolution, I mean, to maintain our Ground, and go through any ſort of Oppoſition or Contradiction whatſoever, which we ſhall have occaſion to encounter: Whether it be from the flattering Allurements, which would inveigle us into Sin, or the Threatnings and Cruelties which would affright, and drive us away from our Duty. To this purpoſe are thoſe Exhortations in Scripture, *Truſt in the Lord and be do-* Pſal. 7
ing good, commit thy way unto the Lord, and hold thee faſt by him, and he ſhall bring it to paſs. Stand 1 Cor. 16.
faſt in the faith, quit ye like Men, be ſtrong; Lift 13.
up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; and make ſtreight paths for your feet, leſt that which Heb. 2.
is lame be turned out of the way. Bb 3 Of 12, 13.

Of this Reſolution we have ſeveral notable Inſtances in the Old and New Teſtament. Such is that anſwer of the three Children to Menaces of an angry Tyrant, who would have compelled them to Idolatry. O *Nebuchadnezzar*, we are not *careful to anſwer thee in this Matter. If it be ſo, our God whom we ſerve, is able to deliver us from the burning fiery Furnace, and he will deliver us out of thy hand, O King. But if not, be it known unto thee, O King, that we will not ſerve thy Gods, nor worſhip thy golden Image which thou haſt ſet up.* Such that of *Daniel*, who, notwithſtanding an irreverſible Decree had paſſed, that whoſoever ſhould ask any Petition of God, or Man for thirty Days, ſave only of the King of *Perſia*; and, that this Decree was by a particular Malice levelled at Him, yet would not diſcontinue his uſual daily Devotions to the God of *Iſrael*. Such that of St. *Peter* and St. *John*, and the other Apoſtles, who notwithſtanding the Injunctions and Threatnings of the *Jewiſh Sanhedrim*, and the Scourgings and Impriſonment, already inflicted upon them, replyed in their own Vindication, *We ought to obey God rather than Men*. Such that of St. *Paul* to the Brethren, who would have diſſwaded him from going into *Judea*, for the better ſecurity of his Perſon; *What mean ye to weep, and to break my heart? for I am ready, not to be bound only, but alſo to dye at* Jeruſalem, *for the name of the Lord Jeſus*. And in the Cloſe of his Eighth to the *Romans*, he expreſſes the firmneſs of his Mind, in Terms as high as Words can poſſibly carry it; that *neither tribulation nor diſtreſs, nor hunger, nor nakedneſs, nor peril, nor ſword, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things preſent, nor things to come, nor life, nor death, nor height, nor depth, nor any Creature ſhould be*

Dan. 3. 16, 17, 18.

Dan. 6.

Act. 5. 29.

Act. 21. 13.

Rom. 8. 35, &c.

able

able to draw him off from the Love of God. Such in a Word, is that Gallantry of Soul, of which the Apoſtle produces ſo many Glorious Inſtances in the Eleventh to the *Hebrews*, which leads me to anſwer an Enquiry, not improper or unlikely to be made upon this Occaſion; and that is, by what means a Man may hope to attain to this Steadineſs and immoveable Reſolution of Mind, in the performance of his Duty, though at the Expence of any Difficulties that may attack him in it.

Now this cannot better be done, than by frequently repreſenting to our Thoughts, *Firſt* the ineſtimable Rewards, prepared for a Recompence of our Fidelity; than the endleſs and unconceivable Miſeries, which all, who draw back, and fall away in time of Tryal, render themſelves obnoxious to; and *laſtly*, to convince our ſelves, that the Thing, how difficult ſoever it may appear, is yet really not impacticable, to obſerve the Examples of others, who have done and endured the ſame Things before us, if not much greater, than God puts upon us. And of theſe Patterns, none is ſo likely to enflame our Zeal, and provoke our Imitation, as that of Chriſt himſelf; whoſe Sufferings were not like ours, a Chaſtiſement for any Sin of his own, or impoſed by a Power irreſiſtible and ſuperiour to his own; but purely voluntary, and choſen out of mere Love and Tenderneſs for our Good. How profuſe are the Men of this World, in their Boaſts, of Wounds received, and Fatigues ſuſtained, in the ſervice of their Prince; though he never expoſed himſelf at all for their Safety? But, if that Prince lead them on in Perſon, if he do not only hazard himſelf, but actually ſuffer in the Action, What Soldier,

who hath the leaſt Spark of Honour, does not ſtand by him, and follow him into the very hotteſt of the Service? Now this is our Caſe, the Captain of our Salvation hath been Wounded, and Buiſed, and infinitely more Afflicted, for us, than we can be for him; And ſhall we be ſuch deſpicable Wretches, to ſhrink and fall off from him, when he calls us into the Field?

But if this be thought a Model, too perfect to frame our ſelves upon, let us at leaſt animate our ſelves by a Reflection upon the noble Exploits, which our Brethren, in all Points like us, of the ſame Paſſions and Frailties have done; and when they, through ſo much Tribulation, have entred into the Kingdom of God, let it not ſeem hard, if a little of it be laid in our Way thither too. St. *Paul* gives this deſcription of his own and the other Apoſtles condition, when they firſt planted the Goſpel; that they *were Fools*, and *weak*, and *deſpiſed for Chriſt's ſake*; that they endured *Hunger*, and *Thirſt*, and *Nakedneſs*, and *Buffeting*; that they had no ſettled Habitation, and maintained themſelves by their *own Labour*; that while they *Bleſſed*, they were reviled; when they were *Perſecuted*, they took it; when they were *Defamed*, they returned *Calumny with Entreaties*; that they were made as the *Filth of the World*, and the *Off-ſcouring of all Things*. That the Courſe they took to approve themſelves the *Miniſters of God*, *was*, *by much Patience*, *by Afflictions*, *by Neceſſities*, *by Diſtreſſes*, *by Stripes*, *by Impriſonments*, *by Tumults raiſed upon them*, *by Labours*, *by Watchings*, *by Faſtings*, *by Pureneſs*, *by Knowledge*, *by Long-Suffering*, *by Love unfeigned*, &c. The account given of himſelf in particular, in the Eleventh of that Epiſtle, The

1 Cor. 4.

2 Cor. 6.

ad-

admirable Exhortation to this purpoſe, ſo affectionately urged in the Twelfth to the *Hebrews*; The Conſideration, how dear theſe Sufferers were to Chriſt, how Virtuous and Holy in themſelves, how uſeful to the World, how eaſy it had been for God to have prevented all their Sufferings, or to have changed their Circumſtances, and turn'd the Hearts of the moſt virrulent Perſecutors in a Moment, if theſe Afflictions had not been more expedient, and contributed to his Honour, and their Benefit, much more than Eaſe, and Plenty, and Proſperity, and Favour with Men: In a word, The whole New Teſtament, eſpecially, is one continued Doctrine of the Croſs, explaining the Ends of it, the Profit to be obtained by it, the mighty Supports provided for thoſe that are oppreſſed with it, the Behaviour proper under it. So that no part of that Bleſſed Book can be diligently peruſed, without furniſhing us with ſome one or more of the particular Inſtructions, whereof it hath been my Endeavour to give my Reader a due Apprehenſion, in this Chapter.

CHAP. IV.

A Fourth and moſt dangerous Obſtruction to Holy Reſolution. The Love of the World.

THE former Obſtructions, to the removal of which, the Chapters laſt peruſed, have, I hope, by the aſſiſtance of God's Grace diſpoſed my Reader, though they be very great, yet may they in this reſpect ſeem leſs

leſs formidable, becauſe they ſtand ſingle and alone. But that, which we are now preparing to encounter, is of a general Influence, and indeed the common Root and Source of all the reſt. For, whether Men grow deſperate in their Sins, or decline the Service of God, upon pretence of difficulty, or fear of perſecution, or averſion to Suffer, what Good Men are frequently called to; ſtill the Love of the World is at the bottom of all, and the ſeveral Excuſes produced in their own Vindication, are but ſo many Effects of this pernicious Cauſe. If the Jews refuſe to confeſs Chriſt, it is becauſe
John 12. *they love the Praiſe of Men more than the Praiſe of God:* If *Demas* forſake St. *Paul*, when impriſoned for the Confeſſion, and Propagation of the
2 Tim. 4. Truth, *the Love of this preſent World*, is the cauſe of his Deſertion. This is an univerſal Evil, diffuſed every where, and lurking in many Hearts, where it leaſt appears; Nay, covering it ſelf oftentimes by ſuch artificial Diſguiſes, as ſeem moſt directly oppoſite to, and yet iſſue directly from it.

Of this we need no other Confirmation than
Mat. 13. that Divine Parable of the *Sower*; In which are
Mark. 4. repreſented Three ſorts of Men, upon whom the Word of God hath no effectual influence,
Luk. 8. and as many Reaſons aſſigned, why it miſcarries in each of them reſpectively. The *Firſt* are compared to the *Way-ſide*; upon which whatever Seed is ſcattered, the Fowls of the Air preſently pick it up, or the Feet of the Paſſengers tread it down. And this Chriſt expounds, of the careleſs and unthinking Hearers, who never attend to the Buſineſs of Religion ſeriouſly, and ſuffer the Devil, or any wicked or trifling Suggeſtion, to juſtle all they had heard, out of their Minds. The

The *Second* are reſembled to *Stony Ground*, where the Seed flouriſhes a while, but for want of Good Root, and depth of Soil, it dries up, and withers away in ſtreſs of Heat or Drought: And theſe are a kind of fickle People, that intend, and begin, well; ſet out with a very warm and eager Zeal, but upon any Diſcouragement, any trying Affliction, they fall from their own ſtedfaſtneſs, and grow as cold in their purſuits as if they had never entertained any Thoughts of God and Religion at all.

The *Third* are ſaid to be a Field, where the Corn comes up indeed, but is ſo over-powered with Thorns, that is, the Cares, and Riches, and Pleaſures, and deceitful Vanities of this World, that the Good *Corn is perfectly choaked, and brings no Fruit to Perfection.* From whence we may, very juſtly infer, that this is the moſt deplorable State, and moſt dangerous Obſtruction of all the reſt. Becauſe, here the Corn is ſuppoſed to have taken Root, and to come up; and yet, notwithſtanding all theſe Promiſes of a plentiful Crop, the Increaſe is hindred. So that, whereſoever the Chriſtian Faith, which anſwers to the Good Seed, is planted, and received, and peaceably profeſſed, and yet does not bring forth the Fruit agreeable to that Seed; A Holy Converſation, and the Service of Almighty God, (which alas! is the Caſe of moſt Countries which call themſelves Chriſtian at this Day) there the main hindrance, which keeps back ſuch a bleſſed Increaſe, is the Love of, and Concern for this preſent World.

The Importance of this Parable is abundantly intimated to us, by that very ſolemn beſpeaking Men's attention to it, *He that hath Ears to Hear, let him Hear:* By that ſignificant Preface

to

to the Expoſition of it, *To you it is given to underſtand the Myſteries of the Kingdom of Heaven; but to others it is not given*; that *ſeeing they may ſee, and not perceive*, &c. Thus imputing the Diſciples Skill in the myſtical and moſt concerning Truths of the Goſpel, to be in ſome good Meaſure due to their being let into the true meaning of this Parable. And therefore Chriſt magnifies their Advantage above that of common Men, *But bleſſed are your Eyes, for they ſee, and your Ears, for they hear.* After all which pompous *Apparatus*, follows, *Hear ye therefore*, (for this is a Priviledge by which you are diſtinguiſhed) *the Parable of the Sower.* Since then all that is neceſſary, or proper, to be ſaid upon the Subject now before us, is comprehended in this Parable, I ſhall keep cloſe to that only; and enforce what I would recommend, for the taking away the Hindrances of a Holy Life, growing from the Love of the World, by theſe following Particulars.

Firſt, In regard our Lord, with the Cares and Pleaſures of the World mentions the *deceitfulneſs* of Riches, I ſhall endeavour to ſhew the Vanity of all Temporal Enjoyments and Advantages, how little they are worth in themſelves, how unworthy to divert us from the Purſuit of heavenly Treaſures; and then, how wretchedly they delude us, and fall ſhort of what they pretend to, and what we are drawn in to eſteem them for.

Secondly, In regard, our Lord calls theſe Cares and Thorns, I ſhall examine, how they come to deſerve this Title, notwithſtanding the ſeeming Satisfactions which attend them.

Thirdly, I ſhall enquire into that quality, by which they are ſaid to *choak* the Word, and make the Man unfruitful. And, *Laſt-*

Laſtly, I ſhall give Directions for uſing the World ſo, as not only to prevent theſe Miſchiefs, but to make it and its Advatages turn to our mighty Comfort, and more glorious Reward hereafter.

SECT. I.

Of the Vanity and Deceitfulneſs of the World.

NEver was any Point proved by a more competent Evidence, than this. It is not left to reſt upon Philoſophical Arguments, drawn from the nature of the Thing, or ſuch Colours of Probability, as humane Art and Wiſdom may put upon it; but upon the Teſtimony of One, who had greater Opportunities of knowing the utmoſt theſe Advantages here below can pretend to, than ever any Man had. The Books of *Kings* and *Chronicles* give us an account almoſt incredible, of the Proſperity, and Grandeur of *Solomon*; that of *Eccleſiaſtes* informs us from himſelf, what Liberty, what Pains he took, to indulge all theſe Enjoyments; and yet, when the Whole comes to be computed, the moſt conſummate Wiſdom, from its own Practice and dearbought Experience, ſumms up the whole in this ſhort, but often repeated, Sentence, *All is Vanity and Vexation of Spirit.* St. *John* in the New Teſtament, hath taken particular Care, to diſſwade Chriſtians from entangling themſelves in the Love and Affairs of the preſent World, from a Conſideration, how very fleeting and uncertain all its Joys are. And, deſcending to particulars, he reduces the Subſtance of them all to Three Heads, which he terms *the Luſt of the Fleſh, the Luſt of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life.* Comprehending under the 1 Joh. 2 16.

the *First*, All bodily and ſenſual Pleaſures; Under the *Second*, All the Pomp and Gaiety of Riches. And under the *Third*, All that Honour, or Greatneſs, or Fame, which Ambition pretends to ſeek, and Pride values it ſelf upon. Theſe three therefore, with the Dependences upon them, I ſhall conſider in the preſent Argument. And *First* of all, That, which which ſeems to be of largeſt extent, meant by thoſe Words of the Apoſtle, *The Pride of Life*, and capable of being branched out into the following Particulars.

First Vainglory, by which I underſtand an inordinate deſire of being thought and ſpoken well of, eſteemed, applauded, and praiſed by Men. I call it an *Inordinate* Deſire, becauſe, when confined within due Meaſure, and regulated by proper Objects and Means, there is a deſire of this kind, ſo far from being blameable, that it is not only lawful, but highly neceſſary, uſeful, and commendable. But when this is propoſed, as a Man's chief End, though there is ſcarce any more common, yet is it certain, there cannot be a greater, and more exquiſite, Folly. For, what in truth is this, but chaſing a Feather, flying up and down in the Air, and toſſed to and fro by the Blaſt of every Man's Breath; wearying ones ſelf in a Thing hard to be gotten, and of little or no value, when we have got it? For what real value can there be in a Thing ſo mutable, as that muſt needs be, which depends upon the Inconſtancy and Capriciouſneſs of Men's Humours; that pulls down one, and ſets up another, without any Merit or Reaſon; that makes a Man great and little, or nothing at all, good or bad, in a Moment, and at Pleaſure.

Of

Of this the World never had, or could have so pregnant an Instance, as our Blessed Saviour, who was so far from giving just Offence, that he deserved the Love and Admiration of all Mankind; and yet, never were People more divided, never were the same Persons more suddenly, more unaccountably changed, than in their Opinions of, and Deportment to, him. Some said he was a Samaritan, *and had a Devil, why should they hear him?* Others that he was a *Great Prophet, and spoke as never Man spoke.* Some were convinced that *he was a Teacher come from God, because no Man could do the Miracles that he did, except God were with him*; Others again were no less peremptory, that he could not possibly *be of God, because he wrought Miracles on the Sabbath-Day.* The Multitudes, on the Tenth Day of the Month, conducted him to the Holy City, with all the Ceremonies of Respect, and Shouts of Triumph; And, on the Fourteenth of the same Month, those very Multitudes were instant with loud Voices, to have him crucified; and preferred a Robber, and a Murderer before their late adored *Son of David, and their King coming in the name of the Lord.*

John 9.
John 7.
John 3.
John 9.
Mat. 21.
Chap. 27.

If then this Innocent, this Holy Person, this Preacher and Pattern of Righteousness, this worker of Miracles, was no better dealt with; What Security, what Confidence can any of us, infinitely inferiour to him in Desert, and blemished with Failings and Faults innumerable, have of better Treatment? Why should we put the Stress of all our Labours, upon so wretched, so doubtful an Issue? Why should we lay our selves at the Mercy of every spightful Detractor, or false Flatterer? Have we no surer a Game to play than this? Yes certainly, St. *Paul esteemed* 1 Cor. 4. 3.

it

it a ſmall Thing to be judged of Man's Judgment. And ſo ought we; Provided, the Maſter of the Race, and the Giver of the Prize, approve us, it is of no great Conſequence, whether the Standers-by be pleaſed or not. To accommodate our ſelves to their liking, is to grind with every Wind. And, how wretched a Thing is He, that drudges, and toils, and ſlaves himſelf upon every puff of Breath, but is immediately damped, and loſt, aſſoon as this Blaſt of Praiſe ſlackens upon him?

Prov. 27. 21. The Scripture hath obſerved very juſtly, that *As the Fining-Pot for Silver, and the Furnace for Gold, ſo is a Man to his Praiſe.* This tries him throughly, and ſoon diſcovers whether his Virtue be true Standard, or of a baſe Alloy. For, as Metal, if it be Good, is not hurt, but purified by the Fire, but if Bad, turns into Droſs and Fume; ſo is a Good, or a Bad Man, affected with Commendations. How many do we ſee puffed up, and even tranſported, beyond all ſober Senſe, by a general Applauſe; and as dejected and deſpicably melancholy again, by Contempt, and a common Cry going againſt them? How many are ſupported in their Sins, and tempted to value themſelves for their Wickedneſs, by Countenance and Credit, and Great Examples? How many groſs and nauſeous Flatteries do we hear, and ſee, kindly received; and yet they who cannot but be ſenſible, they are ſuch, have not the Wiſdom or the Grace

Pſal. 141. to pray with *David, that theſe precious Balms,* theſe Words as ſmooth as Oyl, *may not break their Head.* Is not this Vanity? Is it not the moſt refined Madneſs? Thoſe Glorious Beings above us, the Bleſſed Angels, ſeek not their own, but God's Honour only. And we, poor groveling

groveling Worms of the Earth, affect to be Magnified, and neglect our Makers Glory. The Elders in the *Revelation* take off their Crowns, and cast them at the Feet of the Lamb; and we Labour to take the Crown from his Head, and put it on our own. So truly does the Psalmist pronounce, *verily every Man living is altogether Vanity*; And we never confirm this Sentence against us more effectually, than by our most follicitous Pursuits after Reputation and Applause. Especially, when these, as too generally they do, obstruct us in our Duty. For what more extravagant, more absurd, than to neglect the Service of God, for any Thing the World will say or think of us? What will it signify to us in the next Life, how People censure or commend us here? Allow this but one serious impartial Thought; and then I will venture to appeal to thy own Conscience, whether the World and the Love of it, in this respect, be not the very Abstract of Vanity it self.

Rev. 4.

Psal. 39.

2. A *Second* Branch of Ambition, is the Desire of Worldly Honour and Greatness. Dignity and Promotion is in the sight of many, a Jewel of high Price, a Purchase worth all the Toil and Danger, that can possibly be paid for it. But of how fatal influence this is to Religion, we have many sad Examples upon Record, to inform us. This was the very disposition, that hindred the chief among the Jews from confessing, and coming in to Christ: This check'd the good Intentions *Pilate* had, of rescuing Jesus from the Malice of the Jews; and made the conviction of his Innocence too weak a Match for the Danger of being thought no Friend to *Cæsar*. This kept back *Agrippa* and *Festus* from becoming Christians, though the first of them confest

John 11.

John 19.

Acts 26. St. *Paul's* Doctrine had *almoſt perſwaded him* to be one. But alas! Theſe Men, and the many Millions, who tread in their ſteps, do not give themſelves the Trouble, of weighing this darling Idol of their wicked Hearts, in an equal Ballance. For in good Truth it is but a painted Treaſure; acquired with great Trouble and Hazard; preſerved with infinite Anxiety, and Difficulty; and loſt with an inſupportable Grief and Remorſe. To wean our ſelves from this Trifle, we need only recollect, how many have ſought in vain, what we deſire; how many have had it, and found no Comfort in it; how many have climbed to the higheſt pitch of it; and been tumbled down again, in an Inſtant; and how ſhort theſe Men's Satisfactions fell of their Cares, and Fears, and Sorrows. What is now become of all thoſe Princes, thoſe might Men, in all Poſts and Profeſſions, who once took ſuch Joy in their own Advancement? Do Men ſo much as talk, or think of them? Are not all their Laurels long ſince withered, and even their Names and Memories buried in their Graves? The Men, that durſt not once have looked them in the Face, now trample them boldly under-Foot, and ſit in Judgment over all their Actions. So ſhort an Enjoyment is Honour, to them who are moſt ſucceſsful in their Endeavours after it.

But the very Method, which is uſually moſt proſperous in aſpiring after it, is another Evidence of its Vanity. He thought very pertinently, who compared it to a Man's own Shadow, which, the faſter he runs after it, flees the faſter from him, and when he runs away from it, follows him; in ſhort, which is not to be caught but by falling down to the Ground; and, even then too,

the

the Man that thinks he hath it, finds his Hands empty as before. Thus we ſee the Eager and Ambitious frequently diſappointed, the Modeſt and Humble courted and advanced: And thus it is in ſucceeding Ages, as well with regard to Memory, as to preſent Poſſeſſion. The Greatneſs of a Man's Soul leaves more laſting Impreſſions behind it, than that of his Fortune or Promotion: And, Who are now ſo high in general Eſteem, as thoſe good humble Men, which, with St. *Paul* counted all *things but dung, ſo they might win Chriſt?* For, What indeed is that to be accounted of, which neither contents the deſires of the Mind, nor aſſwages the Pains of the Body, nor continues in the Poſſeſſioner's Cuſtody, nor leaves any advantage behind it, when it forſakes him; and conſequently, which is, upon all Accounts altogether unworthy to ſtand in competition with a thing ſo exceeding Beneficial, ſo different from it in all reſpects, as that holy Reſolution, which I am now endeavouring to diſpoſe my Readers to? Phil. 3.

3. A *Third* Vanity, under this Head of Ambition, or *Pride of Life*, is that of Deſcent, or noble Birth. Which is indeed of ſome Conſideration, when attended with Virtue, and the fear of God; but without this to recommend it, it is an errand Trifle, and not fit to be eſteemed, either by God or Man. Our true Pedigree is no where better drawn, than by holy *Job* For, be our Family what it will, there is not any of us but may joyn in that Confeſſion. *I have ſaid to corruption, Thou art my Father, and to the worm, Thou art my Mother, and my Siſter:* And, if any of us think it below our ſelves to own this Kindred, the Tombs of our Anceſtors will teſtify againſt us. The beginning of all true No- Job 17.

bility was Virtue; and therefore that which was our Predeceſſour's Ornament and Reward, ought to be a Spur to thoſe who ſucceed them. Their Names and Titles, without their Deſerts, do but reproach their degenerate Poſterity, and in no degree prevent their being utter Aliens to all that is valuable in the Family. What a fondneſs is it then, to go a begging to the Dead for Honour, to rake up Urns, and Aſhes, and old Records, for ſomewhat there, to cover our own Shame with? The King's Coin does not change the Metal; and he that is Refuſe or Counterfeit in himſelf, cannot be made *Sterling* by the formality of a Stamp. The Methods taken by God have proceeded upon Meaſures very different from This. The Prince and Saviour of the World was ſeldom diſtinguiſhed by any other Title, than the *Son of Man*; and though he were Lord of all, yet he ſtiles himſelf commonly a *Shepherd*, a *Servant*, and the like. His Anceſtor *David*, who was advanced to a Temporal Throne, was taken from the Sheepfolds, and the youngeſt of the Family:
1 Cor 1. And the Spiritual Governours of his Church, were choſen out of Shops, and Cuſtom-Booths, and Fiſherboats: The Mean appointed to confound the Mighty, and the Simple to ſubdue the Wiſe, (as one of them ſays) ſo inſignificant a preeminence is this of Blood; ſo empty, where Virtue is not with it; but ſo perfectly againſt all Senſe, that it ſhould be a pretence to detain Men from Virtue, or tempt Quality and Condition, to look upon Religion and the Service of God, as a thing below its Care, and very beſt regard.

4. Another Vanity contributing to *the Pride of Life*, is Worldly Wiſdom, ſuch as the Scripture tells us, is *Fooliſhneſs with God*. And, if it be no better

better, conſidered in it ſelf, what is it when moving in Oppoſition to God, and the only true, that is Religious, Wiſdom? It is a moſt amazing thing to conſider that we ſhould be made after God's own Image in the Faculty of Reaſoning, and yet, that the Judgments of the generality of Mankind, ſhould be ſo vaſtly different from his. Who would not imagine, that the ſhrewd and ſubtle, the nice and the eloquent ſhould have been the propereſt Perſons both to propagate, and to do moſt eminent Service in the Church of Chriſt? And yet it ſeems this Doctrine is of another Temper, and requires other ſorts of Inſtruments. For, as *not many noble, ſo not many wiſe, neither after the fleſh are called.* Nay, *if any man ſeemeth to be wiſe in this World, let him become a fool, that he may be wiſe towards God*, ſays St. *Paul*. Theſe two kinds of Wiſdom go upon diſtant Principles, and purſue quite different Ends. And therefore the Wiſdom of this World is vain, and of no account, except it be ſubject to the Wiſdom of God. And they, who for any Temporal Reſpects, though ſeemingly of never ſo great importance, ſhall condemn thoſe that deſpiſe the World, and abandon all for God's Service, Their Wiſdom is the groſſeſt and moſt fatal Folly: And a Day will come, when they ſhall confeſs, and be ſadly ſenſible, that it is ſo. But ſtill this is to be underſtood, not of all Wiſdom in general; but of that, which contradicts, or hinders, the true Wiſdom from above. 1 Cor. 3. 18.

5. A *Fifth* Vanity reducible to this Head is Beauty, of which the Wiſe Man ſays, *Favour is deceitful, and Beauty is vain.* This a painted Serpent, charming and fair without, but full of deadly Poiſon within. A very deſtructive Snare Prov. 31.

this, and many have been ſeduceed and undone, by it. God hath imparted ſome degrees of Lovelineſs to his Creatures, thereby to draw us to the love and admiration of the Creatour, by theſe Rays or Shadows of his own eſſential Goodneſs. But, where our Hearts ſtop ſhort, we gaze like Children on the gilded Cover, without improving by the Contents of the Book. For the true uſe to be made of this, would be to think how lovely and adorable He muſt needs be, who could impart ſuch excellent, ſuch attracting Charms, to Earth and Aſhes: And to conſider, how exquiſite our Happineſs will be hereafter, when we ſhall be admitted to enjoy his glorious Preſence, of whoſe amiable Graces the nobleſt Creatures have but a very ſmall part communicated to them. Would we but exerciſe our ſelves in theſe Reflections, our Hearts might be preſented pure and unſpotted before God, full of chaſt Delights, and pleaſed with an innocent Contemplation of his Works. But, by reſting in the outward appearance of things, we come to be captivated with a fair Face, let looſe the Reins to unclean Thoughts, and kindle the polluted Fires of Luſt in our Breaſts.

Hence do ſo many periſh daily, with a deceitful Form, whoſe Emptineſs it were moſt eaſy to diſcover. For, let the moſt inviting Face but be touched with a little Blemiſh, and all its Power is immediately loſt and gone. Two or three fits of an Ague deſtroy the beſt Complexion; and if the Soul depart from this Idol of a Body, in one half hour its Favour vaniſhes; and within two Days time, the moſt paſſionate Lover can ſcarcely bear it above Ground. But, if none of theſe things happen,

yet

yet Old Age is ſtealing on, and this by inſenſible degrees will make ſuch an Alteration, that ſcarce any accident could disfigure it more, than Nature it ſelf will ſhortly do. And can any thing be more vain than that Beauty which of its own accord grows into Deformity? Can any thing be more abſurd, than to be proud of this in our ſelves, or to endanger our Souls for it in Others? How wretchedly do they miſpend their time, who imploy Hours and Days, Care, and Pains, and Art, to procure or preſerve this fleeting Shadow, as if their Happineſs conſiſted in it? Nay to make it, as too many do, a hindrance to their Duty here, and an Inſtrument of eternal Damnation hereafter?

6. The Laſt Vanity I ſhall mention under this Head of *Pride*, is Gaiety of Apparel. This is the groſſeſt of all the reſt, and yet as common as any of them. For, let us but obſerve the thing it ſelf, and its Scandalous Original. Had *Adam* never loſt his Innocence, we had never ſtood in need, and moſt probably never known the uſe, of Clothes at all. For theſe were firſt contrived for a Cover to our Shame, and a relief againſt our Infirmities; and Shame and bodily Infirmities are both of them the unhappy effects of Sin. So that to value our ſelves upon This is, as if a Beggar ſhould boaſt of thoſe Rags, to which his own Negligence and Profuſeneſs had reduced him. St. *Paul*'s advice is, *If we have food and raiment, let us therewith be content.* 1 Tim. 6. St. *John Baptiſt* is particularly taken notice of, for the Auſterity and Coarſneſs of his Habit; and ſo is *Elijah*, in whoſe Spirit and Power he came. 2 Kings 1. The firſt Garments we read of, were made of Skins of Beaſts, ſuch probably, as had been ſlain in Sacrifice. Our Bleſ- Gen. 3 Matth. 11.

sed Lord mentions it, as one of the Delicacies of King's Courts, to wear soft Clothing, and one
Luke 16. of the Characters given of the Rich Glutton is, his Purple and fine Linnen. Not that all Distinctions of this kind are to be condemned? Such as Decency, and Custom require, may be very innocent, when used with Humility and Modesty. But, to be curious and expensive, and to take a Pride in these things, is both sinful and extremely vain. And This is generally the Case. Men spoil and rob all the Creatures, that come within their reach; They take their Wool, their Furrs, their very Excrements, they dive into the Sands of the Sea, and dig deep into the Bowels of the Earth; And, when they have put on These, which they call Ornaments, plundered and borrowed from the vilest of Creatures, they then look big, and fancy all this Comliness their own. They conceive high Thoughts of themselves, and look for Respect from others upon this Account; As if That, which covers, or perfumes their Bodies, were some substantial Excellence, inherent in their Minds. Nay they carry the Matter so far, as often to make the preserving, the putting on, or the want of these things, a pretence for neglecting God's Service; a vast expence of Time; a diversion from better Employment; a corruption of the most valuable Virtues; and in short, the bane of a holy Resolution, and a truly Christian Conversation. And thus much of the *first* of St. *John*'s general Heads, *The Pride of Life*.

2. The Second is termed, *The Lust of the Eyes*, by which, as was said before, I understand the Pomp and Pleasure of Riches. Concerning This St. *Paul* commands *Timothy*, and

in

in Him every Minister of the Gospel, to *charge Them that are rich in this world, that they be not highminded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God.* And the reason why no Confidence ought to be reposed in them is, because as *Solomon* observes, *they cannot profit in the day of wrath,* when God afflicts us in this World, or when he takes us out of it: And least of all, when we most want relief, in the day of Death and Judgment. To which purpose it is, that the Wicked are introduced, lamenting their own Folly, when too late, in these Words among others, *What hath Pride profited us? or what good have Riches with our vaunting brought us? All these things are passed away like a shadow,* &c. And what need of any farther proof, that These are Vanity, than This; that when the Owner most wants help and comfort, they cannot furnish him with either? The Life of such a Man is passed over like a Sleep; in which He dreams, as it were, of Golden Mountains, pleasing Imaginations of his Wealth, and the Service this would do him in any exigencies, have entertained him for a while; but when Sickness, or Trouble, or the approach of Death and Judgment awaken him, he finds all this but a Dream in effect, and himself destitute of all support in his extremity, and the bitterness of his Soul. Nay, St. *James* represents the Matter yet a great deal worse, and tells us, that very often they do not only not allay, but add to the Miseries of the Possessours. *Go to now, ye rich Men,* says he, *weep and howl for your Miseries that shall come upon you. Your Riches are corrupted, and your Garments moth-eaten. Your Gold and Silver is cankered, and the rust of them shall be a witness against you, and shall eat your flesh as it were a*

1 Tim. 6. 17.

Prov. 11. 4.

Wisd. 5. 8, 9.

Jam. 5. 1, &c.

were fire; ye have heaped up treaſure together for the laſt days. All This, and much more, might be alledged out of Scripture; by which the Holy Ghoſt ſignifies the Danger and Vanity of Plenty and Pomp, and the folly of thoſe Men, who dote upon it ſo, as either to get Wealth diſhoneſtly, or to hoard it up niggardly, or to ſquander it away idlely and unprofitably. *How*
Mark. 10. 24, 25. *hard is it,* ſays our Saviour, *for them that truſt in Riches to enter into the Kingdom of God? It is eaſier for a Camel to go through the Eye of a Needle, than for a rich Man to enter into the Kingdom of God.*
Luke 6. And again, *Wo unto you that are Rich, for ye have received your conſolation.* To which we may add that of St. *Paul, They that will* (that make it
1 Tim. 6. 9. their aim and buſineſs to) *be rich, fall into Temptation, and a ſnare, and into many fooliſh and hurtful Luſts, which drown Men in deſtruction and perdition.*

Is it poſſible for Words to expreſs more forcible Arguments for the drawing Men off from the Love of Riches? Muſt not every Covetous Man, who reads theſe Texts, ſtand ſelf-condemned, and reproached by his own Conſcience? Let People pretend what they pleaſe, of Families, and Dependences, and a Care neceſſary to be taken, for providing theſe a comfortable ſubſiſtence. All This, and whatever elſe they can alledge, will never vindicate the inordinate Love of, and anxious Concern for, the World. Our Saviour does not only not admit, but he expoſes the Vanity of this Pretence. He
Luke 12. asks the Rich Man, who had filled his Barns, whoſe thoſe Fruits and Goods ſhould be, which he had with ſo much ſollicitude provided, and promiſed himſelf a long Enjoyment of? The reply of Wife and Children is cut out in the very

ry firſt Word, *Thou Fool*; for Folly it was, and great Folly, to give himſelf up to the World, even upon that Conſideration. For, What comfort, think we, can it be, to a Father in the Torments of Hell, to reflect that his Family live plentifully for a little while upon Earth, by means of that Wealth, which is become an Inſtrument of making Him miſerable for ever? Will he not then wiſh, that his Soul had been more and his Family leſs, his care? And what is Family then? Alas! A new Scene opens, the Face of things, and the Diſpoſitions of Men's Minds, are quite changed: Our Relations ſhall not be to us, in the other World, what they are now; Partiality, and Carnal Affections, have no place there; but the only Object of Love and Hatred remaining will be Good and Evil. One Alms beſtowed for God's and Chriſt's ſake, upon an Enemy, or a Stranger, will yield us more ſolid Comfort, than an overgrown Eſtate left to our Children, or a Family raiſed by our moſt painful Induſtry. Were This duly conſidered, Men would uſe the World, as not abuſing it: They would do good to themſelves, by doing good to others; even The Hungry and Naked Members of Chriſt that want, and are ready to periſh. They would, if not before, yet at leaſt in their laſt Hours, ſend ſome *Friends* before them, *made of the Mammon of unrighteouſneſs, that when they fail theſe may be a means of receiving them into everlaſting Habitations.* For, then only is the Rich Man happy, when he hath the Grace to make a right uſe of his Riches; who, while the time of his Stewardſhip continues, manages them ſo prudently, as to make them turn to true Account, by being laid out, to the Honour of God, the

the Benefit of Others, and the increaſe of his own everlaſting Reward. And ſo much for the ſecond Head.

3. The *Third* Head of Worldly Vanities, ſtyled by St. *John*, *The Luſt of the Fleſh*, comprehends under it all thoſe ſenſual Delights, whereby the Body is chiefly gratified. Such as Feaſting, Merriment, *Rioting, and Drunkenneſs, Chambring and Wantonneſs*, and ſuch other Entertainments and Diverſions, as St. *Paul* denotes, by *making proviſion for the Fleſh to fulfil the Luſts thereof*. And, though many of theſe be in their own Nature lawful, when confined, to proper Seaſons and Meaſures, and limited by ſuch Rules, as health, and convenience, and decency preſcribe; Yet are they, not only vain but extremely Dangerous, in thoſe Exceſſes, which the Men of this World uſually covet and indulge them in. To theſe do the Miſeries denounced by our Lord belong, *Wo unto you that are full, for ye ſhall hunger. Wo unto you that laugh now, for ye ſhall mourn and weep.* And of the ſame ſort of Perſons compared with his own Diſciples, it is ſaid in another place, *Ye ſhall weep and lament, but the World ſhall rejoyce.* Thus making it as it were, a note of Diſtinction between Good and Bad Men, that the One ſhould paſs their Days with a large Mixture of Sorrow, and the Other let themſelves looſe to jollity and preſent Delights.

Rom. 13.

Luke 6. 25.

John 16. 20.

And reaſon great there is for this Diſtinction. A Chriſtian's Life is a ſerious and thoughtful Thing; he conſiders the mighty Importance of the Work upon his Hands; he hath many afflicting Remembrances of his Sins and Failings; he keeps a conſtant and awful Senſe of the Juſtice of God upon his Spirits; he feels the Miſe-

ry

ry and deſolate Condition of the Soul in this Vale of Miſery, and Scene of Temptations; he pants and groans for a releaſe, and longs moſt earneſtly for that perfect Redemption, where not only Pains and Tears, but Sin and Imperfection, and Danger ſhall be done away. And theſe Impreſſions, being vigorous and lively upon a good Man's Mind, in proportion to his Love and Zeal for God and Religion, preſerve it from flying out into Extravagance, and render him always ſober and grave, and compoſed. And, though This Man know it both lawful and neceſſary, and therefore makes no ſcruple, to recreate himſelf with innocent and moderate Diverſions; yet does he conſtantly bear in mind, what Watchfulneſs and Carefulneſs becomes a Man, who is travelling through rough and ſlippery Ways, to his Heavenly Country; And, that all who labour after Eternal Salvation, are directed *to work it out with fear and trembling.* Hence are thoſe Sayings of the Wiſe Man, *It is better to go to the House of Mourning, than to go to the House of Feasting. Sorrow is better than Laughter, for by the ſadneſs of the Countenance the Heart is made better,* and in another Place, *Happy is the Man that feareth always.* Phil. 2. 12. Eccleſ. 7. Prov. 28. 14.

And ought we not to fear, and look before us, to think what account we ſhall be able to give, of our Talents, our Time, our Wealth, our other Advantages and Opportunities of doing Good? Ought we not to conſider, and contrive, how we may beſt withſtand our Spiritual Enemies, mortify our Luſts, obſerve God's Commandments, and, by our prudent Conduct, make our Light to ſhine before Men? Sure, if theſe Matters were but attended to, but eſpecially

ally if any of us would but reflect, what State our Soul is in, and how we could ſtand before the Great God, in Judgment, ſhould a ſudden Death hurry us thither immediately, This would cut off a World of idle and impertinent Diverſion; and we ſhould hear no more of thoſe Complaints, ſo unbecoming the Mouths of Chriſtians, that Time lies upon their Hands, and that Conſideration is a Burden. This would keep Men from letting themſelves quite looſe to Vanity, and ſenſual Mirth, which above all Things, unhinges and breaks the Tone of the Mind, ſcatters our Thoughts, and indiſpoſes us for any thing that is Serious and Good, that becomes a Man to do, and requires Application in order to be done. It is very obſervable, in our Pattern the Bleſſed Jeſus, that, though he diſdained not to carry our Sorrows, and to ſhed our Tears, yet we never find him condeſcending to partake of our Laughter, nor our Jollities. The Two extremes of our Life are in God's Hand, and he hath ſo ordered the Matter, that Pain and Sorrow attend our Entrance into, and our Paſſage out of, the World: But the middle Part, which is left in our own Hands, we diſpoſe of to Folly and dangerous Delights; and in ſtead of imploying the little ſpace we have to the beſt purpoſes, we labour how to keep it void of Buſineſs, and to drive away even that moſt neceſſarry Thought, whence we came, and whither we are going.

O! Were we but the Wiſe Travellours, which we ought to be, our Pleaſure would not be ranting and revelling upon the Road, but that of going the right Way, and thinking on the place whither we are bound. Nor ſhould we, in our Inn, be Sollicitous to feed high,

high, and indulge our Appetites, but chooſe what is moſt proper to ſuſtain us in our Journy; and remember that any Dainties we call for will be ſure to inflame the Reckoning. And therefore the beſt way is ſo to Eat and Drink over-Night, as we ſhall be content to pay, in the Morning, when we go away. For a Reckoning we muſt come to, and how jocund ſoever we may be now; Yet, when Death and Judgment call upon us, aſſuredly our ſenſual Mirth will be Heavineſs, and our Joy Mourning. Let us therefore conſider, that we indulge the Pleaſures of Sin, at our own vaſt Expence; that all Neglects of God and our Duty, all our wanton and intemperate, our profane and diſſolute Converſation, will be charged upon us; and let us fear, leſt that Sentence againſt *Babylon* be ours; *How much ſhe hath glorified her ſelf, and lived deliciouſly, ſo much Torment and Sorrow give her.* Rev. 18. 7.

I hope, by this time, Every one of my Readers is convinced of the Vanity of the World, and of all the Satiſfactions it can pretend to, ſo far as concerns the worthleſſneſs of theſe Things in themſelves: I ſhall now proceed to ſpeak briefly of that, which I propoſed, the as Second Part of this Argument, their deceiving us, and falling ſhort of what we expect in, and eſteem them for. We are all dealt with in this Caſe, as *Jacob* was by *Laban*, who, after he had ſerved him Seven Years for *Rachel*, was at laſt put off with *Leah*. For, how many falſe Promiſes does the World make daily, and how little do we receive of that, which it encouraged us to depend upon? One Man flatters himſelf with the Thoughts of ſound Health, and long Life, and behold he is cut off in the midſt,

of

of his Days. Another with Promotion and a plentiful Fortune, and he sinks into Contempt and Extremity of Want. Run over your Acquaintance, look into all Places, and all Conditions, and you shall find City and Country, Princes and and private Persons, full of Lamentations and Complaints. Some, for the loss of what they had; Others, for the missing what they were in prospect of; a Third sort, for not finding their expected Satisfaction in what they have attained; All, for being in some sort deluded and defeated. Infinite indeed, are the Cheats of this Dissembling World. It is goodly, and beautiful, and gay to the Eye; but when we come to prove and handle it, it hath no Substance or Solidity at all; It is, as the Psal 62. *Prophet* says, *Deceitful upon the Weights, and altogether lighter than Vanity it self. O miserable World,* says St. *Augustine*, whose Griefs are real, *but thy Delights Counterfeit and Empty; Thy Sorrows and Sufferings are sure, thy Pleasures uncertain: Thy Pains are permanent, thy Comforts short and transitory; Thy Toils insupportable, thy Rewards poor and despicable: Thou promisest with all the Profuseness of a Prince, but payest with all the Indigence of a Beggar. Thy Miseries are pure and unmixt, without any Abatement, thy Happiness tempered and allayed with all kinds of Misery.*

To get a true knowledge of the World, and see things in their true Light, it is necessary to retire at some distance, and take our view, from thence. For, while we are in the midst of it, and engaged in it's Affairs and Enjoyments, we walk in a Mist, and are blind to our own Condition. Thus it first puts out our Eyes, and then leads us wrong. It corrupts our Distinctions between Good and Evil, and then lulls us asleep with

with a profound, but falſe, Security. It binds us with Cords of Silk, and makes us content to be deceived and enſlaved. It falls in with the Inclinations of Senſe, and ruines us to our Hearts deſire. It ſhews us the *Kingdoms of the Earth, and the Glory of them*, and finds our greedy Ambition diſpoſed *to fall down and worſhip*. It ſhews us damaged Goods, and will not allow us to carry them to the Light. It hath *Ahab's* Four Hundred falſe Prophets, which keep us from hearing the Counſel of one honeſt *Micaiah*; and ſtifles Reaſon and Conſcience, when they would tell us the Truth. It lays before us pleaſant Baits, but if we nibble at them, ſtrikes us with Death upon the Hook. It offers us, like *Babylon*, Golden Cups, but the Drink is mingled with deadly Poyſon. In a Word, It is an alluring *Jael*, proffering us Shelter, but Murdering us if we accept it; a flattering *Joab*, embracing us with one Arm, and ſtabbing us to the Heart with the other; a Treacherous *Judas*, that betrays us with a Kiſs. It torments them, that love it, deceives them, that truſt it, treats them worſt, that take moſt Pains to ſerve it, and damns them to all Eternity, who give their Hearts up to it. *How long* then *ye Sons of Men, how long will ye turn your Glory into Shame, how long will ye love Vanity, and ſeek after a Lie?* For ſuch in truth is the World; Falſhood and Fraud, and treacherous Malice, lie at the bottom of all its fair Pretences.

SECT. II.

The World compared to Thorns, and why.

I Proceed now in the *Second* place, to enquire into the fitneſs of that Compariſon made of the World, wherein our Saviour Chriſt reſembles it to *Thorns*. An Enquiry, the more neceſſary, becauſe ſo many ſeem to take marvellous Satisfaction in it's Riches and Pleaſures. And therefore it needs all the Authority of our Lord himſelf, to make this received for a juſt account of the World. And yet, if we will take a cloſe and impartial view of the Matter, the reſtleſs pricking Cares, which gall the Soul, and the many Temptations to Sin, which wound it even to death, do abundantly juſtify this Title. Hence it is, that *Solomon* does not only call all temporal Enjoyments *Vanity*, but *Vexation of Spirit* too; intimating, that where theſe have once entred and taken poſſeſſion, there is no more place for true quiet and peace of Mind; but warring Deſires, tumultuous Thoughts, afflicting Fears, Anguiſh, and Anxiety, and incurable Diſcontent. How many rich Men, feel this to be true? How many Ambitious groan under their cruel Bondage, and yet have not the Heart to break this Yoak of Tyranny? And certainly, of all the Puniſhments, inflicted by God upon ſordid and worldly-minded Wretches, his Juſtice and Wiſdom is moſt eminently ſeen in this, that he makes what they eſteem their greateſt Felicity, to prove their continual Torment. He hems them in on every ſide with Cares, that ruſh upon them i i the Morning, and aſſault their waking

waking Thoughts; that haunt and dog them close at the Heels all Day, and embitter their promised Enjoyments, that pursue them to their Beds, and break their Sleep at Night. In a word, that fulfil that Sentence of *Isaiah*, expresst in most significant Metaphors, when he says, *They hatch Cockatrice Eggs, and weave the Spiders Web: He that eateth of the Eggs dieth, and that which is crushed breaketh out into a Viper. Their Webs shall not become Garments, neither shall they cover themselves with their Works. Their Works are Works of iniquity, and the Act of Violence is in their Hands.* Isa. 59.

Thus we see the Dangers, the Disappointments, the painful Travel, the pernicious Fruit, of these Men; which expose them to infinite and unprofitable Toil, and end at last in their own Guilt and Destruction. So that, to this case in particular may very fitly be applyed that description, given by *Moses* of Wicked Men in general; *Their Vine is as the Vine of* Sodom, *and of the Fields of* Gomorrah; *their Grapes are Grapes of Gall, their clusters are bitter; Their Wine is the Poyson of Dragons, and the cruel Venom of Asps.* So dreadful and loathsom are the Figures made use of to represent the Wicked Worldling's Condition to us; so bitter and dangerous what he falsly calls Pleasure; if once it get the dominion over his Heart, and be not managed with the nicest Caution, and most steady Sobriety. Deut. 32. 32, 33.

But, though the sense of the Holy Ghost, delivered by these inspired Authours, be so amply declared in the Point before us, yet need we not rest upon even the weightiest and most sacred Authorities for Proof, but may satisfy our selves beyond all Contradiction, from our

own Reaſon, and the Nature of the Thing. And, among others, theſe following Particulars are a ſubſtantial Evidence, that thus it always is, and cannot be otherwiſe, with the Men who are of that Diſpoſition, intimated by the Seed ſown among Thorns, in the Parable now under Conſideration.

1. *Firſt*, The ſhortneſs and uncertainty of all their Proſperity, and the many Accidents, which theſe Advantages are liable to be taken from him by, after one hath gotten them, as he thinks, in quiet poſſeſſion. For, however defective the good Things of this World may be in other Reſpects; yet, no doubt it would add much to their Value, and be ſome excuſe for ſetting our Hearts upon them, could they be conſtant and perpetual. But this is a Priviledge, they are not capable of, and infinite are the Hazards, that have them at their Mercy. It is much more than probable, they may be wreſted out of your Hands by other means. But there is one thing infallibly certain to ſeperate, in a very little while, between them and their Poſſeſſors; And the proſpect of this unavoidable parting is a moſt cutting Conſideration; As the Son of *Sirach* hath very movingly expreſt it; *O Death, how bitter is the Remembrance of thee to a Man that liveth at reſt in his Poſſeſſions, unto the Man that hath nothing to vex him, and hath proſperity in all things!* Were this Death at as great a diſtance from us, as the longeſt Period of human Nature would admit, yet even ſo the Term is but a ſhort one. But alas! This is very far from being the Caſe, and daily we obſerve it otherwiſe. How many have we ſeen advanced high and haſtily, and as quickly tumbled down into their Graves, before they have

Eccluſ. 41. 1.

have reaped any Fruit of their Labours? How many, revelling in Joy, and all things to their Hearts content, whose Happiness one Week hath put an end to? How frequent Examples of this Nature may we have heard and read, how many indeed may we see daily? What an Heart-breaking was it to *Alexander* the Great, after all his Toils and Conquests, when his Soul was full of Joy and Pride, and expected to sit down quiet universal Monarch of the World, when he knew no other occasion of Grief, than only that there were not more Worlds to enlarge his Glory and his Spoils, just in this juncture to be struck with Death, when all things thus conspired to render Life more than ever desirable? What a Confusion must it needs have been to all those, who, like the Rich Man in the Gospel, after great Care taken to bestow their Treasures, and promising themselves a most comfortable Enjoyment of much Provision laid up for many Years, hear that dreadful Sentence of Death pronounced upon them; *Thou Fool, this Night shall thy Soul be required of thee, and whose then shall all these Things be*, which thou hast heaped together with so much anxiety, and hugged thy self in, with such a mistaken Delight? This, This is the miserable Condition of many eager and greedy Worldlings, whose only Business and Aim it is, to build stately Seats, to purchase great Estates, to gather vast Summs of ready Money, to buy Titles and Places of Honour, to make powerful Alliances, and strengthen their Interest, as if these Things were never to have an End. And when at last they think of setting up their Rest, then, like Beasts of Burden, they are turned off, and all the Treasure taken off from them, under the

load of which they have laboured and groaned; and all the Effect of their Drudgery is, that their Bodies are wasted, and their Souls wretchedly galled, with the carriage of that, which they are denyed at last any Enjoyment of.

2. Another Thing, which justifies the comparing, even the Prosperity and Pleasures of this Life, to *Thorns*, is that grievous Counter-ballance of Sorrow and Dissatisfaction, which every earthly Advantage carries along with it. For never yet was there any Comfort or Delight, without it's Allay; Never any Man, who had the longest experience of it, that could say he was perfectly satisfied with his present Circumstances. We have already seen what variety of Fears and Cares the possession of Riches is ever incumbred with: And how miserable a Slavery, Honour, and Advancement renders the Candidates and the Attainers of it subject to. The gratifications of our fleshly Appetite, even when innocent and lawful, are as St. *Paul* says, attend *with Tribulation*; but if these be irregular and unallowable, then is it followed with sad Remorse, and Ten Thousand bitter Consequences.

1 Cor. 7.

3. It were endless, to attempt an exact account of all those Calamities, to which we are all exposed, in this State of Mortality. The Infirmities and Diseases, the Misfortunes and Dangers, to which our Bodies are daily and hourly obnoxious: The infinite contending Passions of our Minds, which perpetually afflict and distract us with Grief, with Envy, with Anger and Hatred, with inordinate Desires, or sensual Love. The many adverse Accidents, that happen to our Estates, the numberless Mischiefs and Disquiets, that are brought upon us from our Neighbours, by means of unjust and

un-

unreaſonable Men. The Feuds and Factions, the Quarrels and Contentions that teaſe, and vex, and torment us, while one engages us in troubleſome and expenſive Suits, to defend our Title, another brings us in danger of our Life; a Third deſtroys our Good Name, by falſe and ſcandalous Reports. Spight and Envy, Flattery and Fraud, Violence and Revenge, Perjury and Subordination, Forgery and Falſewitneſs, are ever and anon laying Snares for our Ruin. The Days, the Hours we live, are ſcarce ſo many, as the Miſeries and Vexations, the Contradictions and Contentions we meet with in them. And, which is very remarkable, the Evil we endure hath this Advantage, above the Good we enjoy, that any one Oppoſition or Defect quite over-powers and deſtroys the Senſe of many Comforts. So that, if all the other Satisfactions, of which our preſent State is capable, could be ſuppoſed to center in one Man, and yet any one part of his Body, any one Circumſtance in his Affairs be in diſorder, this ſingle defect would take off from all his other Enjoyments. We ſee by one eminent Inſtance in Scripture, how very deep and painful an Impreſſion a very Trifle will make upon a Man of a Worldly Diſpoſition; for *Haman* in all his Grandeur and Pomp declares, that *neither the Glory of his Riches, nor the multitude of his Children, nor all the Things wherein the King had promoted him, nor his Advancement above the Princes and other Servants of* Ahaſuerus, *nor his being the only Perſon admitted to* Eſther's *Banquet, availed him any Thing at all, ſo long as he ſaw* Mordecai, *the Jew ſitting at the King's Gate.* Eſth 5. 11, 12, 13.

4. Beſides all theſe Miſeries, we ſhall do very well to conſider one more great and formidable

to a Good and a Wiſe Man, than all the reſt; and that is the Temptations, and Snares, by which theſe Things ſeduce and entangle Men in Sin and Perdition; ſo that no Man is ſecure one Moment, but in a State of Danger, like his, that walks in a Dark Night, upon a ſlippery Precipice, where every ſtep he takes may be his Ruin. This condition of Mankind is ſaid to be repreſented to a Holy Man of old, by a Viſion of the World hung round about with Nets, and the Devils ſitting at every corner, watching their Prey, and driving People into them. And the Prophet *David* begins his deſcription of
Pſal. 11.6. God's Judgments upon Wicked Men, by ſaying, that he ſhall *rain upon them Snares*; that is, ſhall ſuffer theſe to fall as thick about them, as Showers do from the Clouds. And thus indeed it is; For there is no Action, or Accident, ſo trivial, which, to a Mind not rightly diſpoſed, does not prove an Inſtrument of Death. Every alluring Object he ſees, every looſe Diſcourſe he hears, every pleaſing Thought he cheriſhes; Youth and Age, Friends and Enemies, Honour and Diſgrace, Riches and Poverty, Succeſs and Diſappointments, Company and Solitude. The common Refreſhments and conveniences of Life, Food and Rayment, all, draw the Man into Miſchief, who is not watchful to manage them rightly, and to prevent the ill Effects they are capable of producing, but gives his Mind up to Senſuality, and ſo takes part with the Enemy againſt himſelf.

And yet, notwithſtanding Sin is the only Thing, that can make People truly Miſerable, how eaſily are they drawn into it, how greedily do they commit it, how prevailing, how univerſal is the Infection? *Job* obſerves, that
Job 15. *Wicked Men drink Iniquity like Water*, not only with-

without any Reluctance or Scruple, but with the ſame Eagerneſs and Pleaſure, as a Man quenches his Thirſt. And if this ſurpriſe us, a very little of our own Obſervation and Experience may ſerve to make that wonder ceaſe. For if we walk the Streets, and take a view, of the Dealings in Trade; of the Proceedings in Courts of Judicature; of the Conſults in Aſſemblies of State; what Frauds, what Falſhood, what Partiality, what Piques, what Emulation ſeems to reign every where? How loudly does every Nation and Countrey, and Age in the World, and how have they ever complained, of Juſtice bought and ſold, of Truth wreſted and perverted, of Shame and Honour loſt; of Innocent Perſons condemned, and Guilty acquitted, of the Wicked advanced, and the Virtuous oppreſſed? How many Robbers and Defrauders flouriſh? How many Extortioners and publick Cheats bear ſway? How many Murderers are reſpected, and admired, how many vile and deſpicable Wretches are put in Authority? Nay, which is worſe, how many Beaſts, and Men of no Principles, no Qualities of true Men, but that Figure which the Brute within diſgraces, have been in all Ages advanced to govern their Betters? Search all Hiſtory and you ſhall find no Period of Time free from theſe Miſeries in one part of the World or other. And keep company with your own Contemporaries be it in what Part or Age of the World ſoever, and tell me truly, whether Vanity and Pride, Cenſoriouſneſs and Detraction, Spight and Envy, Diſſimulation and Fraud, Debauchery and Profaneneſs, Swearing and Blaſphemy, Lying and Perjury, or ſome of theſe, do not make up the moſt conſiderable Part of the Con-

Converſation. In ſhort, the greater part of Mankind govern themſelves directly, as Beaſts do. Senſuality is their Principle; Appetite, and Paſſion, and Power are their Law; and Juſtice and Reaſon, Religion, and Virtue, are Rules and Meaſures, much talked of indeed, but infinitely oftner to be met with in Pretence, than in Practice. And, if all this diſorder do, as it moſt certainly does, proceed from an inordinate Affection for the World, let my Reader judge, whether upon this account of Temptation and Sin alone, but much more upon this added to the other Reaſons alligned before, our Saviour did not expreſs himſelf very ſignificantly and juſtly, when he compared the World with its Cares and Pleaſures, to Thorns

SECT III.

How theſe Thorns choke the Word, and make it unfruitful.

OF theſe Thorns the Sower from Heaven affirms, that they choke this good Seed of this divine Word, and render the Soil overrun with them, (the Men of worldly Diſpoſition) *unfruitful.* And he expreſſes himſelf upon this occaſion by a Word, that properly denotes ſtopping the Breath, or Suffocation for want of Air. Now thus it is here. The Perſons, whom this ſort of Spirit poſſeſſes, are ſtrangled, as it were, with groſs Vapours, and diſtempered Humours, and the refreſhing Air of heavenly Life can find no Paſſage to their Hearts. For it is not poſſible for both theſe Spirits to abide together, and we are told, the ſad Condition of them who want the latter. *If*

Rom. 8. 9.

any

any Man, says the Apostle, *have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.* And, since the distinguishing the Tree by its Fruits is a plain and an universal Rule, we cannot be at a loss to discern the Contrariety of these two Spirits, by the Contrariety of their respective Products. St. *Paul* hath left us such marks, as cannot possibly deceive us in making this Judgment. *The Fruit of the Spirit*, he tells us, *is Love*, the common root and band of all Virtues, *Joy*, Satisfaction in serving God; *Peace*, Quiet of Conscience, and an evenness of Mind under any Dispensations of Providence; *Long-suffering*, opposed to Impatience; *Gentleness*, Sweetness of Behaviour, and tenderness in reproving or punishing; *Goodness*, kind Dispositions, and actual Performance, where it lies in its Power to be beneficial; *Faith*, Fidelity and Constancy; *Meekness*, in not being hastily provoked, not resenting Injuries deeply, not arrogating to its self more than its due; *Temperance*, a pure and chast Conversation, and a reserved use of even lawful Enjoyments. *Against these there is no Law.* They are so evidently conducive to the perfecting Humane Nature, and the benefit of Society, that no Law of God or Man ever prohibited any of these, but always laboured to oblige Men to, and by all possible means to enforce, the Practice of them. But let us cast our Eyes a little back, and the same Chapter will present us with another Catalogue of a very different Character and Complexion, which proceed from the Spirit of the World: *The works of the Flesh are manifest*, which are these; *Adultery, Fornication, Uncleanness, Lasciviousness, Idolatry, Witchcraft, Hatred, Variance, Emulations, Wrath, Strife, Seditions, Heresies, Envyings, Murders,* Gal. 5. 22, 23. Vers. 19, 20, 21.

Dunken-

Drunkenneſs, Revellings, and ſuch like: of the which I tell you before, as I have alſo told you in time paſt, that they who do ſuch things ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God.

From hence now it can be no hard matter, for any Man to determine concerning his own State, what manner of Spirit he is of, and, whether he belong to the Kingdom of
Verſ. 24. God or no. *They that are Chriſt's*, the Apoſtle adds, *have crucified the Fleſh with its affections and luſts*; that is, They have ſo mortified their bodily Appetites, as not to be drawn into Sin, by any vicious Inclinations from within, or Temptations from without. And again, *They that live in the Spirit, muſt walk in the Spirit*, their Behaviour muſt be ſuch as may teſtify, what Principle they act upon, and are influenced by: So then, if our Works be Carnal and Worldly, our Spirit it follows is ſo too; and we are dead in Spirit, have no part in Chriſt, nor any place in his Kingdom. And, ſince the World does not only abound with ſuch Works, but diſpoſes them that love and ſerve it, to the Practice and Habits of them; ſince it permits no Fruits of Chriſt's Spirit to grow, or leaves ſo much as a poſſibility for the good Seed to come to any Maturity, where theſe Tares have taken Root; hence it is, that the Scriptures always repreſent Chriſt and the World in a State of Oppoſition, and the Diſpoſitions agreeable to each of them as incompatible with one another. Thus
Joh. 14. 17. himſelf tells his Diſciples, *The World cannot receive the Spirit of Truth*; and *that neither He, nor his Servants*, and true Followers, are of the
Joh. 17. World, though *they live in the World*. And in
Ibid. 25. his Prayer a little before his Paſſion, *O Righteous Father, the World hath not known thee, but I*

have

have known thee; and these (his Disciples) *have known that thou hast sent me.* Hence St. *John* says, that, *if any Man love the World, the love of the Father is not in him.* And St. *James*, that *whosoever will be a Friend of the World, is the Enemy of God.* St. *Paul* speaks of profane and negligent Christians being *condemned with the World.* And Christ seems to insinuate no less in that dreadful Exception to his Father; *I pray for them, I pray not for the World, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine.*

1 Joh. 2. 15. Jam. 4. 4. 1 Cor. 11. Joh. 17. 9.

You see what difference he puts between those that are his and Gods, and those others whom he comprehends under the Name of *the World.* And Oh! that Men would well consider this; that they would think, how dismal the case of those People is, who are excluded from the Intercessions and Prayers of *the Lamb, that takes away the sin of the World.* Those Prayers, in which his very Enemies and Tormenters, and Crucifiers were once allowed a part. This certainly would awaken them out of their stupid Security; This would check their most busy Projections, and take off from the Relish of their sinful Delights, and by abating their Love for the present Vanities, shew them the Necessity of a future and everlasting Provision; for which, if they take no care, and are not duly qualified, better were it for the greatest, and gayest of them all, ten thousand times better, if he had never been born.

No wonder then, if St. *Paul* take care to advise his *Romans*, that they would by no means *be conformed to this present World*; but be *transformed* to Christ's likeness *by the renewing of their Mind.* No wonder, if St. *John*, who recorded those Sayings of his Master upon this Subject,

Rom. 12. 2.

just

juſt now recited, and was throughly acquainted with his Mind in this Matter, cries out like a Man giving warning to People, that are running upon the very Mouth of Danger, *Love not the World, neither the things that are in the World.* For if we may not love it, if we are not allowed to conform our ſelves to it, but at our manifeſt Peril, and under the ſevereſt Penalties; if the being Followers and Imitators of Chriſt requires Practices and Diſpoſitions, diametrically oppoſite to the Children of this Generation; if to be like one of theſe exclude us from the Inheritance of the Children of Light; though this go no farther than merely a Complyance with the Vanities and Cuſtoms of the World; What ſhall become of thoſe abandoned Men, who do not only comply with, but even court it; that inſtead of being carried along with it, admire it, and reſt in it, and lay out all their time and pains, and thought upon nothing elſe?

1 Joh. 2. 15.

If we would be ſatisfied what provokes Chriſt to hate the World to ſuch a Degree, St. *John* hath reſolved that Point too, where he ſays, that *the whole World lies in Wickedneſs.* This is the only thing, which the Spirit of the World leads to, and is ſet upon. It tends to Pride and Vain-glory, to Ambition and Covetouſneſs, to Malice and Revenge, to ſenſual Pleaſures, and all manner of vile Indulgences. Quite contrary to the Spirit and Temper of Chriſt, which diſpoſes to Humility and Meekneſs, to Contentedneſs and Moderation, to forgiving Injuries, and loving Enemies; to Abſtinence and Purity, to Self-denial, and taking up the Croſs; to a generous Diſdain of all earthly Pleaſures, and an eager Purſuit of the Kingdom of Heaven. He hates the World, becauſe it hates him, it per-

1 Joh. 5. 19.

perſecutes the Good, and advances the Bad; it does, ſo far as in it lies, extirpate Virtue, and plant Vice in its ſtead. It ſhuts the Doors againſt him when he knocks, and ſtifles all the Motions of his good Spirit.

Since then the World is ſo vain in it ſelf, ſo deceitful in its Promiſes; ſince its Enjoyments are ſo tempered with Trouble, and ſo full of Danger, as we have ſeen; ſince it is a profeſſed Enemy to Chriſt, and excluded from his Favour and his Kingdom; what can we make of it, but a Scene of Folly, a Market of falſe and counterfeit Goods, a Labyrinth of Errour, a barren Wilderneſs, a tempeſtuous Sea, a fair Garden without Fruit, a Den of Baſilisks and deadly Scorpions, a Fountain of bitter Waters, a Valley of Tears, and at the beſt a delightful Frenzy? Hear St. *Chryſoſtom* ſumming up the Evidence againſt it. He tells us, it hath nothing in it, but Sorrow and Shame, Repentance and Reproach, Folly and Madneſs, Toil and Terrour, Sickneſs, and Sin, and Death. The Reſt it propoſes, is full of Anguiſh; the Security it gives, without any Foundation; the Labours it engages Man in, without any Fruit; the Sorrow it brings, hath no true Comfort; the Mirth it affords, is of no Continuance; the Miſeries it involves us in, have neither End nor Remedy. And if theſe, and many Evils more, beyond the wit of Man to expreſs or imagine, attend the Love and Service of it; if there be no one ſubſtantial Advantage to be had from it; Why, will we be ſo mad to be cheated with this falſe Diſguiſe? Why do we not ſhew our ſelves Men, and pluck off this Vizard, and effectually convince our Minds of its Vanity? Why do we ſuffer our ſelves to be hindred in, or

kept

kept back from the Service of God, ſo reaſonable in it ſelf, ſo profitable in its recompence, by ſo mere a Trifle, which can never compenſate our Loſs ſuſtained by ſticking to it? Shall we pretend to Reaſon and Prudence, and yet manage our Affairs no better? Shall we, with our Eyes open, make ſo mad a Choice? I ſay with our Eyes open; for after what hath been ſaid upon this Subject, no Man can pretend that he is not ſufficiently warned againſt the Dangers of this Obſtruction to Holy Reſolution, and a virtuous Life.

SECT. IV.

How we may uſe the World ſafely, and to our Advantage.

BUT ſtill there is one thing more behind, requiſite to give a Diſcourſe upon this Subject it's juſt Uſefulneſs and Perfection. For, ſince the World, bad as it is, muſt yet be our Dwelling, and the Troubles and Temptations of it our Diſcipline and Tryal for a certain Seaſon, it is highly neceſſary, that, before this Argument be entirely diſmiſs'd, I ſhould endeavour to put my Reader in a way, how he may avoid the Dangers of this perilous State, and even uſe this World, which is the Inſtrument of eternal Ruin to ſo many, in ſuch a prudent manner, as may turn to his own Gain and greater Happineſs.

For the *Firſt* of theſe particulars, which relates to the avoiding its Dangers, I know not what to adviſe better, than, that Men would very frequently and ſeriouſly bend their Thoughts, upon all that is contained in the foregoing Sections;

ons; for the better diſcerning the Vanity and Deceitfulneſs of the World, and the diſcovery of thoſe Snares, by which unwary Souls are caught *Surely*. ſays *Solomon*, *in vain the Net is ſpread, in the ſight of any Bird*: And, if Men have fair warning, and are made ſenſible, what their Danger is, and where it lies, their Deſtruction, if they run in to it afterwards, is from themſelves, and will admit of no excuſe. From that Account in *Joſhua*, that the Spies made their eſcape from *Jericho*, by the way of the Mountains, *Origen*, according to his Allegorical Method of interpreting Scripture, obſerves, that the only way to avoid the Dangers of the World, is to keep upon the Hills: That is, to be above the World, and to direct our ſteps to a higher and better Place. Thus St. *Paul* ſays of himſelf, and of all good Chriſtians, *Our Converſation is in Heaven*. And, no doubt, the leſs we entangle our ſelves with the Cares of earthly Things, the ſafer and eaſier our Minds will be. For, as the Fowler hath no hopes of his Prey, till he can lure her down to pitch; ſo the Devil, by his Suggeſtions, ſays in effect to Us, as he did once to Chriſt; *Caſt thy ſelf down*. And he cannot deſtroy us, till we ſtoop to his Baits; and taſt, and fall in Love with, and faſten our Hearts down to, the things here below.

Prov. 1. 17.

Joſhua 2.

Phil. 3. 20.

Now, ſince our Affections muſt of neceſſity be placed upon ſome Object, the main Point will be to fix upon One, truly noble and worthy of them; to raiſe our Minds up to Heaven, by pious and devout Thoughts, and pure Deſires. Could we arrive at *David*'s Temper, we ſhould be ſafe. The World would have nothing left to catch hold of us by, could we ſay, as he did, from the very bottom of our

Pſal. 73. 23. Hearts; *Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is nothing upon earth that I deſire in compariſon of thee. My fleſh and my heart faileth, but God is the ſtrength of my life, and my portion for ever.* The Apoſtle had ſecured himſelf, by that Diſpoſition which he expreſſes, when he ſays, *The World is crucified to me, and I unto the World. Yea verily, and I count all things but loſs, for the excellency of the knowledge of Jeſus Chriſt; for whom I have ſuffered the loſs of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Chriſt.* And, in another Place, *Nevertheleſs though we live in the fleſh, we do not war after the fleſh.* Would we but imitate theſe glorious Examples, learn to ſee the World, as it really is; and to deſpiſe it, as in truth it deſerves; Would we *ſet our affections on things above, and not on things on the earth,* thus riſing with Chriſt to his and our promiſed Kingdom; we ſhould mount above the reach of Danger; and all the Temptations of the Devil would no more be able to hurt us, than a Snare upon the Ground does the Bird that ſoars in the Air, and flies away from the Danger it ſees.

Gal. 2. Phil. 3. 2 Cor. 10.

But farther yet; It is in our Power, not only to eſcape, but even to improve upon, and to profit by, theſe Temptations. And our Lord hath directed us, how this may be done, when he ſaid, *Make to your ſelves friends of the Mammon of Unrighteouſneſs.* The Rich Man in Hell, mentioned in that Chapter, had it once in his own diſpoſal, to have never come into that place of Torment at all. And ſo hath every Man, to whom God gives Wealth, and Opportunities in abundance, of making himſelf happier by it to all Eternity. For, as I obſerved formerly, Riches are not the neceſſary Cauſe, but the occaſion only, of their Owner's Deſtruction:

Luk 16. 9.

ction: And this fatal Effect they never have, except when they are abuſed to evil purpoſes, or not employed to good ones. The Caſe is directly the ſame with *Honour*, and *Pleaſures*, and every thing that Men are uſually fond of here below. And therefore, what I ſhall ſay here upon One, I deſire may be, and it may very eaſily be underſtood of, and applyed proportionably to all the reſt.

Our Buſineſs here then is to take notice and warning by the Dangers of others, and when we ſee or read of their Deſtruction, that we be careful to ſteer a contrary Courſe, and not wrack our ſelves upon the ſame Rock. Let then the Men of plentiful Fortunes conſider the Argument made uſe of by the Apoſtle to provoke them to good Works. *Be not deceived; Whatſoever a Man ſoweth, that ſhall he alſo reap.* Gal. 6. 7. *He that ſoweth ſparingly, ſhall reap ſparingly, and he that ſows bountifully, ſhall reap bountifully.* 2 Cor. 9. 6. Now, according to this Rule, What a mighty Harveſt might Rich Men ſecure to themſelves, who have ſtore of this Seed lying by them, and ſuch an abundance of Ground proper to ſow it upon: For our Lord ſays, *That the poor we have always with us, and whenever we will, we may do them good.* Mark. 14. 7. Let them remember, what it was, that diſtinguiſhed the *Sheep on the right hand, from the Goats on the left*: Even the free Performance, and the niggardly, and ſullen refuſal, of good Offices, and works of Charity; That Cloathing the Naked, feeding the Hungry, and laying out their Subſtance, and their Pains, in Kindneſs and Compaſſion, as God had enabled them, entitled theſe to that joyful Sentence, *Come ye Bleſſed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you, from the beginning of the World.* Mat. 25. And let them

them once more, if the Hopes of Reward will not win them, be awed at least by fear of Punishment; tremble at the Testimony their Blessings will one day bear against them; and reflect, that, because the Rich Man in the Parable had *received his good things in his life time*, but would not do good with them, therefore *he was tormented in that flame*; and could not prevail for so mean a Request, as one *drop of Water upon the tip of a Fingure, to cool his Tongue.*

Luk. 16. 25. &c.

I will conclude this Chapter, with a Parable related by *Damascene* in the Person of *Barlaam* the Hermite, and very apposite to our present purpose. "A certain State, he tells us, there "was, where, for many Generations, the Subjects were wont to choose themselves a King, "one of forreign Extraction, and very obscure, "and altogether unacquainted with the Laws "and Usages of the Country. This Prince was "very absolute, and might do whatever he "pleased for the space of one Year. But, at "the Expiration of this Term, while he was "enjoying himself in the most profound Secu-"rity, and living, as if he thought his Reign "would never have an End, they made a sud-"den Insurrection, devested him of his Royal "Robes, dragged him Naked through the Ci-"ty, and banished him, thus destitute and for-"lorn, without so much as Clothes to cover "him, into a Remote Island, where he led the "rest of his Days in Poverty and Misery, as "surprising as his former Plenty, and Ad-"vancement to the Throne had been. It hap-"pened that One Person, wiser than his Pre-"decessors, was thus promoted; who imme-"diately informed himself of this Custom, be-"haved himself with great Prudence and Mo-

Vid. Dam. oper. p. 842. Edit. Bazil.

"deration

" deration in his Power, and bethought him-
" ſelf of making ſome Proviſion againſt that
" time of Abdication, which others had never
" ſhewed any regard to. This Prince then,
" well aware how ſhort his Reign was like to
" be, tranſmitted out of the Treaſury, which
" was intirely at his diſpoſal, vaſt ſums of Mo-
" ny, and Jewels of great Value into that
" Iſland, whither he expected to be ſent off.
" When the Year came about, his Subjects
" treated him with their cuſtomary Inſolence.
" But at his Arrival in the uſual place of Exile,
" whither he went with great Confidence and
" Security, while others that had gone before
" him, languiſh'd in Miſery and Want, He
" found his Mony lodged in ſafe Hands, was
" received with univerſal Reſpect, and lived
" in greater Splendour, than ever he had done
" before, whilſt upon the Throne.

The Application of this Parable is very natural and eaſy. That State is this World, a Country not properly our own. Here Men once poor, who came Naked into the World, are raiſed to great Plenty and Dignity; but after a ſhort Period, and many times when they leaſt apprehend ſuch a Change, they are ſent as Naked out of the World, as at firſt they came into it. Thoſe, who are ſo imprudent, as to make no Preparation for this mighty Revolution, find great Affliction and Miſery in their new dwelling. But the wiſe Prince, who foreſees, and is upon his Guard againſt this Calamity, is that Good Man, who during his Proſperity here upon Earth, ſends before him the Treaſure of Good Works. And theſe, at the day of his Death, ſecure him a kind Reception in the other World; and crown him with Glo-

ry and Happineſs infinitely greater, than it was poſſible for the Condition of Mortality to enjoy. But they, who come thither, like the fooliſh Virgins, without Oyl in their Lamps, meet with no better a Welcome than *I know you not*, nay which is worſe with that terrible doom, of *go ye curſed into everlaſting fire.* From which amazing Malediction, our *good Lord deliver us all, and grant us ſo to paſs through things Temporal, that we finally loſe not the things Eternal.*

CHAP. V.

A fifth Obſtruction to Holy Reſolution. Preſumption upon God's Mercy.

ERrour, we ſay is infinite; and, though the way of Truth be one and ſtreight, yet the falſe and crooked Paths, that lead to Sin and Damnation, are very thick on each ſide; And, how contrary ſoever they may ſeem to each other, yet all terminate in the ſame fatal Place at laſt. It is incredible, how many different Stratagems the Devil hath on Foot to ruin us, and with what a fatal Addreſs he accommodates his Temptations to the Temper and Complexion of every Sinner. Some there are, upon whom none of the Impediments already mentioned have any Power to faſten; and yet they are caught in another Snare, at leaſt as deſtructive as any of the other. The *Firſt* Obſtruction, we ſet our ſelves to remove, was deſpair of God's Mercy, which repreſented the Sinner's Danger to him in ſo gaſtly a Form, that he thought Repentance to no manner of purpoſe, and the Sentence

tence gone out againſt him to be abſolute and irreverſible. But now, we have to deal with a ſort of Men in direct Oppoſition to Thoſe, who vainly preſume upon that Mercy, and think it in their Power to revoke and eſcape that Sentence, whenever they pleaſe. Lay before them the heinouſneſs of their Sins, and the neceſſity of Amendment, and they think all Arguments anſwered with this; that, *God is gracious, and willeth not the death of any ſinner*; that, *as his Majeſty is, ſo is his Mercy*, not only Great, but Infinite; and therefore, not to be overcome by any, though never ſo foul, though never ſo numberleſs Provocations. Chriſt hath dyed for them, and commanded them to truſt in his Merits, which are an Overbalance to all their Sins, and ſo long as they put their truſt in Theſe, it is not poſſible for them to periſh. In Confidence of this Refuge they prolong their wicked Courſes, and add this worſt of Sins to all the reſt, that they make the Goodneſs of God, a foundation for diſpleaſing, and acting in defiance of him. They are in the higeſt degree injurous to the Divine Majeſty, *make ſin to abound*, becauſe *Grace* hath *abounded*; and continue in their Wickedneſs, for that very Reaſon, becauſe his Bleſſed Son hath ſhed his Blood to purge, and take it away.

But is not God indeed merciful? No doubt he is unſpeakably Merciful; There is no end, no meaſure, of his Kindneſs to a wretched Man; Mercy is his eſſential Perfection, his very Nature, and he can no more ceaſe to be Gracious, than he can ceaſe to be God. But, though this be one, it is not the only Perfection of this Divine Nature. And we muſt always ſo conceive of God, as not to ſet up one Attribute in contradiction

to, and to the Deſtruction of another. *Gracious is the Lord, and Righteous,* ſays the Pſalmiſt; and therefore we deceive our own Souls, if we ſo poſſeſs them with Notions of his Mercy, as quite to forget and diſregard his Juſtice. *All the Ways of the Lord are Mercy and Truth,* but they are ſo, to *ſuch as keep his Covenant and his Teſtimonies.* For ſuch only have a Right to his Promiſes; and his *Truth* is not engaged to extend theſe any further, than Men qualify themſelves, by performance of that Condition, upon which theſe Promiſes are ſuſpended. Every true Convert lays hold upon theſe Excellencies in Conjunction; and conſiders the inviolable Friendſhip and mutual Harmony which is eſtabliſhed between them. If a Sinner lay hold upon Mercy alone, he periſhes by Preſumption; if upon Juſtice only, he ſinks into Deſpair. But, when theſe two conſpire together to frame ſuch Ideas of Almighty God, as reſult from a due Temparament of theſe Perfections; then is the Soul happy indeed; free from the ſad Anxiety of groundleſs Terrors; free from the treacherous Flatteries of Carnal Security; and in the direct way to Juſtification and Salvation.

Pſal. 25.

St. *Auguſtin* hath cut the middle Way between theſe Two Extremes, excellently well. "Let thoſe Men, ſays he, who are ſo highly "delighted with the Mercy and Gentleneſs of "God, call to Mind, and Tremble at his Ju"ſtice and his Truth. God is exceeding gra"cious, 'tis confeſt; nay, he is Long-Suffering, "and not eaſily provoked: But ſtill he is *a Righteous Judge, Strong* though he be *Patient.* He is *provoked* indeed *every Day;* but there is a Seaſon of Wrath, before which, *If a Man do not turn,*

Tract. 33. in Joan.

Pſal. 7.

he

he will whet his Sword. Two Things there are, that above all others threaten Sinners with eternal Ruin: The one is hoping too much, which we call Preſumption: The other hoping too little, which is termed Deſpair. He that ſays to himſelf God is a Good God, a Merciful God; and therefore I will follow my own wicked Imaginations, for that very Reaſon, becauſe he is a Good and a Merciful God; This Man is in danger of being undone by hoping too much. He that is ſenſible of the hainouſneſs of his Sins, and the Wrath of God, but takes it for granted, that thoſe Sins cannot be pardoned, nor that Wrath pacified; that ſays in his own Heart, I am ſure to be damned, and therefore, Why ſhould I deny or reſtrain, my Inclinations, in any ſinful Gratification they hanker after; this Man is killed by Deſpair. Let us obſerve then what Method God takes to ſave theſe People, and correct their miſtaken Apprehenſions of this Matter. To the Preſumptuous belongs that warning of the Son of *Sirach, Concerning Propitiation, be not without fear to add Sin unto Sin. Say not his Mercy is great, he will be pacified for the multitude of my Sins; for Mercy and Wrath come from him, and his Indignation reſteth upon Sinners. Make no tarrying to turn to the Lord, and put not off from Day to Day; for ſuddenly ſhall the Wrath of God come forth, and in this ſecurity thou ſhalt be deſtroyed, and periſh in the Day of Vengeance.* To the Fearful and Deſpairing is that affectionate Invitation directed by *Ezekiel, At what time ſoever the Wicked Man turneth away from his Wickedneſs, which he hath committed, and doth that which is lawful and right, he ſhall ſave his Soul alive. Repent and turn your ſelves from all your Tranſgreſſions, and ſo Iniquity ſhall not be your Ruin.* Eccluſ. 5. 6, 7. Ezek. 18. 27, 30.

So

So manifeſt is the Danger, ſo great the Folly of thoſe wretched Men who ſupport themſelves with a vain Confidence in the Goodneſs and Compaſſion of Almighty God, and make this an occaſion of hardening and eſtranging their Hearts from him, and his Ways. And ſurely it is a moſt abſurd Conſequence, and a very perverſe Method of reaſoning, to argue thus. My God is Merciful and Long-Suffering, and therefore I will abuſe his Mercy, and weary out his Patience, The Scripture, it is evident, inſtructs us to draw a quite contrary Inference from theſe comfortable Premiſes. God is compaſſionate and ready to forgive, he waits long for my Converſion, and does not cut me off in the middle of my Sins; but the longer he forbears, the heavier will his Puniſhments be at laſt, if not prevented by a timely Reformation. The greater his Patience, the more unpardonable is my neglect; and therefore I ought by no means to make any delay, but to accept and lay hold of his Grace, while the Day of Grace laſteth. This is the Pattern St. *Paul* hath ſet us, who puts the Caſe with ſome vehemence and indignation, as if it implyed a more than common Degree of Inſenſibility to be guilty of it. *Deſpiſeſt thou*, ſays he, *the Riches of his Goodneſs and Forbearance, and Long-Suffering, not knowing that the Goodneſs of God leadeth thee to Repentance; But, after thy hardneſs and impenitent Heart, treaſureſt up unto thy ſelf Wrath againſt the Day of Wrath, and Revelation of the Righteous Judgment of God?* Theſe Words moſt manifeſtly import, that the Reaſon, why God defers his Vengeance, is thereby to give us ſpace, and to diſpoſe our Minds to Repent; And, that no Man's account is like to be ſo

Rom. 2. 4, 5.

dread-

dreadful, as his, who is not won-over by theſe diſpenſations of Kindneſs: That, beſides the Sins ſuch Perſons commit, the Opportunites and Mercies, they have ſtood out againſt, ſhall all be imputed, and ſadly enflame the Reckoning at laſt. Obſtinacy does but heap up Wrath in reſerve, and the longer we continue in it, the more Work, and the more Sorrow we cut out for our ſelves, if ever we amend at all. But St. *Auguſtine* hath added another very dreadful Conſideration, which renders even this very ſuſpicious; For, ſays he, *If he offer thee Grace to Day, take it while it may be had; for thou canſt not tell whether he will repeat the Proffer to Morrow. If he give thee Life, and Underſtanding, and Memory this Week, uſe them out of Hand, for theſe are Bleſſings which no Man can enſure to himſelf, and ſome, or all of them, may be taken away from thee, the next.* Aug. Tract. 33. in Joan.

The Holy Prophet begins his Seventy Third Pſalm with Magnifying, and Admiring, the Goodneſs of God to his Servants, to ſuch as are of an upright and *clean Heart.* And yet the main Thing he drives at there, is to repreſent the dangerous Condition of Wicked Men in Proſperity, and the heavy Juſtice of God upon thoſe, who, notwithſtanding ſuch Proſperity, ſo far above, ſo very contrary to their deſerts, will yet be wicked ſtill. He forewarns them, that this will not laſt always, that *God ſets them in ſlippery Places*, and will after a while *caſt them down into Deſtruction.* That, *as a Dream when one awaketh* ſo ſhall this beautiful Image of *Happineſs vaniſh*; and that there is but one way to prevent this Terrour, and Deſolation, which is by *drawing near to God*; which, if they ſhall ſtill refuſe to do, he reads their in-

inevitable Doom, in thoſe Words; *Lo, they*
V. 27. *that are far from thee ſhall periſh, thou ſhalt utterly deſtroy all them that* break Faith and *commit Fornication againſt thee.* So that, how good ſoever God is for a time to the Wicked, this can be no Security, that he intends forever to continue ſo; much leſs, from his Kindneſs to the Godly, can any Relief to the Wicked be inferred. Heaven and Hell are not more diſtant, Light and Darkneſs are not more contrary, than his Dealings with theſe Two ſorts of Men.
Pſal. 34. For as the ſame Pſalmiſt obſerves, *The Eyes of the Lord are over the Righteous, and his Ears are open unto their Prayers. But the Countenance of the Lord is ſet againſt them that do Evil, to root out the Remembrance of them from off the Earth.*

It was a Practice very common with falſe Prophets heretofore, which the true Prophets always exclaimed loudly againſt, to ſeduce the People, and uphold them in their Wickedneſs, by crying *Peace, Peace,* when there was no Peace; Nor indeed, can there poſſibly be any to the Wicked. *David* hath told us, upon what Terms only we may have Confidence and
Pſal. 4. Hope in God, when he ſays, *Offer the Sacrifice of Righteouſneſs and put your truſt in the Lord.* Then he will *lift up the Light of his Countenance upon us, and put gladneſs in our Hearts, more than in the time that Men's Corn and Wine, and Oyl increaſed.* The ſenſe of Favour and Friendſhip with a reconciled God will diffuſe a more ſolid and ſenſible Joy through our Souls, than all the Worldly Proſperity imaginable can yield to thoſe, whoſe Hearts are moſt ſet upon the World.
1 John 3. To the ſame purpoſe is that of St. *John, Beloved, if our Heart condemn us not, then have we Confidence towards God. But if our Heart condemn us,*

God

God is greater than our Heart, and knoweth all Things. It is the vaineſt Thing in the World to talk of Truſt in God's Mercy; while our own Conſciences fly in our Faces, and reproach us with ſuch Diſpoſitions and Practices, as he hath declared, he cannot approve, and will one Day bring into Judgment.

It may poſſibly be of ſome Service in the preſent Argument, to put my Reader in remembrance, how God hath dealt with ſeveral eminent Perſons, once high in his Love and Favour, how he hath changed his Affection upon their giving him Offence, and broke that League of Friendſhip which was once between them; And, in a Word, how ſtrict he hath been in calling them to account, and how ſevere in inflicting his Puniſhments. And here, methinks it might abate Men's Security, and take down from their Preſumption ſomewhat at leaſt, would they but in the *firſt* Place reflect upon the Fall of the Angels. Creatures ſo honoured in their Creation, endued with Excellencies, the neareſt of any, reſembling the Perfections of the Divine Nature; in ſo much, that the Scripture calls them the *Sons of God*, in a more exalted and peculiar Senſe, than belongs to any Son, who is not very God. And yet theſe, for the Commiſſion of one Sin of Pride, and ſuch a Rebellion againſt the Divine Majeſty, as ſome have imagined to proceed no farther than Thought only; loſt all the Priviledges of their Bleſt Eſtate; the Love and Favour of God was turned into Hatred irreconcilable, and from the Regions of Bliſs, theſe once glorious Spirits are caſt down into Priſon, and as St. *Jude* ſays, *reſerved in everlaſting Chains under Darkneſs unto the Judgment of the great Day*; conſigned over to Hell,

Hell, and Deſpair, and eternal Vengeance, without Hope, without Redemption, without any poſſibility of Eſcape, or mitigation of their inſupportable Torments.

After this, it pleaſed Almighty God to make himſelf another Friend, one of Fleſh and Blood, deſigned to ſucceed into the Happineſs, of which thoſe Angels by voluntary Tranſgreſſion had deprived themſelves. This was our Firſt Parent in Paradiſe, where God converſed with him after a moſt familiar Manner, and honoured him with ſignal Inſtances of his Care and Kindneſs. He walked and diſcourſed with him, he gave him Dominion of the Creatures here below, and made him his Vicegerent; He put the fierceſt and ſtrongeſt Animals in ſubjection under him, brought them before him, that as a mark of Authority, he might determine by what Names each of them ſhould be called. He miraculouſly created a Help, and a Companion, for Society and Relief to him; he bleſſed them both, and was exceeding liberal in all poſſible Demonſtrations of Love to them: But, alas! this beautiful Scene was quickly changed into a very melancholly and diſmal one. *Adam*, by the commiſſion of one Sin, and that too at the perſwaſion of another Perſon, fell from all his glorious Prerogatives, was baniſhed Paradiſe, condemned to a Life of Labour and Care, of Sorrow and Miſery, of Sickneſs and Pain, to death of Body, and which is worſe, to eternal Damnation. Nor did this Calamity terminate in him, but extended to all his Poſterity, deſcended from him after that Guilt was contracted. And this not otherwiſe to be reverſed, but by a painful Repentance, and the Payment of a Ranſom, no leſs in Dignity and Value, than

the

the Bleſſed and Eternal Son of God made Man; ſuffering and dying in the ſame Nature, that had ſinned; and, by his innocent Life and bitter Death, attoning for the Offences of all Mankind; Whoſe common Repreſentative this Second *Adam* became, in their Puniſhment, as the Firſt *Adam* had formerly been, in the Offence by which that Puniſhment was incurred.

Thoſe Two Wonders of Men, *Moſes* and *Aaron*, were of ſingular Authority, and high in favour with God; Inſomuch, that their Prayers and Interceſſions for the People, over whom they preſided, never returned empty, and unſucceſsful. And yet, when theſe excellent Perſons provoked God at the Waters of Strife, in diſtruſting his Power, and the Miracles he promiſed to Work for the preſervation of the *Iſraelitiſh* Nation, this was interpreted, as ſo great a Diſhonour done to God, that they received a ſharp Rebuke, and all their Repentance could not prevail for a Remiſſion of their Crime. The Guilt indeed was taken off, but not the Puniſhment; for this conſiſted in their not being ſuffered to enter the Land of Promiſe, but dying, with the reſt of their unbelieving Brethren, whoſe Carcaſes fell in the Wilderneſs. They entreated God moſt earneſtly to have this Penalty taken off; but ſtill the Anſwer was, *Becauſe ye believed not, to ſanctify me in the Eyes of the Congregation of* Iſrael, *therefore ye ſhall not bring this Congregation into the Land which I have given them.* Numb. 20. 12.

It ought to be looked upon, as a particular favour to *Saul*, that God made choice of him to be the Firſt King over his own People. We find him commanding *Samuel* to do him unexampled Honours, commending, and taking expreſs

care

care of him, crowning his Wars with wonderful Succeſs, and working mighty Deliverances by his Means, from the Yoke of the Philiſtines, who then grievouſly diſtreſſed his People. And yet afterwards, upon the Breach of one Command, in reſerving ſome of the Spoils taken from *Amalek*, which he had expreſs Orders utterly to deſtroy; Nay, though he pretended to have ſaved them out of a Religious Deſign; we find him rejected utterly by God, degraded from his royal Dignity, delivered up into the Power and Poſſeſſion of an evil Spirit, reduced to infinite Miſeries, and ſo abandoned at laſt, as to fall by his own Hands; his Family diſcontented, his Sons put to reproachful Deaths, and all his Poſterity ruined and extinct.

David, whom God appointed to reign in his ſtead, and exalted him from a mean Condition, who excell'd all other Princes in the particular Tenderneſs God had for him, and was honoured with a Title, of *A Man after his own Heart*: yet, when Luxury and Proſperity had betrayed him into Two of the blackeſt Offences, receives the dreadful Meſſage by *Nathan*, of moſt heavy Diſpleaſure kindled, and ſevere Puniſhments decreed, againſt him. Theſe were not to be diverted by all his Prayers, and Tears, his Faſting and Humiliation, of which the Book of *Pſalms* give us ſo large an Account. All which make it very evident, that no degree of Favour with God can ſecure Men from ſmarting under the Rod of his Juſtice, if they ſhall dare to offend him; and that our Saviour's Words admit of no Exception, *Unleſs ye Repent, ye ſhall all periſh.* The utter Rejection of *Cain*, and his Poſterity; The Deſtruction of the whole World, except *Noah* and his Family, by

a Flood, and that of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, and the neighbouring Cities, by Fire from Heaven; The exemplary vengeance executed upon *Corah* and his Company; and the other Plagues ſent upon the *Iſraelites* for their Idolatry and Rebellion; the ſudden Death of *Nadab* and *Abihu* in the Old Teſtament, and *Ananias* and *Sapphira* and others in the New; Theſe, and many other Examples, are therefore left upon record in holy Writ, to aſſure us, that *though Hand joyn in Hand the Wicked ſhall not go unpuniſhed*, but that *God will repay the Sinner to his Face.*

Who, that conſiders theſe Things, will not find himſelf obliged to confeſs with *Moſes*, that God *is a great God, a mighty and a terrible:* and with St. *Paul*, that *It is a fearful Thing to fall into the Hands of the living God?* For, if God would not pardon ſo many of theſe Perſons already mentioned, for one ſingle Provocation; if ſome of them, not at their moſt inſtant Requeſt, and upon the moſt ſolemn Humiliation; nay, which is infinitely more than all this; If he treated his own moſt Holy and Divine Son with ſuch unrelenting ſeverity, when he ſtood in the place of Sinners only, though he had no Sin properly his own; If the bitter Cup might not paſs from him, though deprecated thrice with vehement Supplications, with Groans and Tears, with Agonies unſpeakable, and Sweats of Blood; What ſhall become of thee, Preſumptuous Sinner, who haſt ſo often, ſo grievouſly offended that Divine Majeſty? What Shadow of a Reaſon canſt thou have, to hope, that he will deal after an extraordinary manner with thee, and break the ſtated Meaſures of his Government and Juſtice for thy ſake? Art thou any better, art thou not indeed much worſe, than moſt of

Deut. 10. 17.

Heb. 10. 31.

theſe? Or canſt thou produce any Exemption, any Priviledge, peculiar to thy ſelf? Is he not ſtill the ſame God that he was then, and are not the Rules of Juſtice eternal and inviolable? Whence then can grow this fond Imagination, that, notwithſtanding thy continuing to provoke him, thou ſhalt at laſt eſcape his Vengeance, and find him nothing in thy own Caſe, but Gentleneſs and Mercy?

Deſcend a little lower yet, and from the Hiſtory of former Ages, conſider the Judgments of the preſent: See how he deals with Mankind now, even under the Covenant of Grace, after that he hath accepted the Reconciliation, made by the Death and bitter Paſſion of his own dear Son. For, though Mercy now be Triumphant, yet is not Juſtice laid aſleep; but ſtrange and ſad Effects of it are offered to thy Obſervation daily. Conſider, how many Millions of wretched Souls are ſtill permitted to remain in Darkneſs; how many whole Nations, where the Light of the Goſpel once ſhone, in it's brighteſt luſtre, are now relapſed into their primitive Night of Ignorance and Sin; how many, even among Chriſtians, are entangled in dangerous and fundamental Errors; how many, among thoſe who believe aright, diſhonour their Chriſtian Profeſſion by heatheniſh Lives: This will ſhew the *ſtreightneſs* of the *Gate*, and the *narrowneſs* of the *Way*, that leads to Heaven, and how *few they be that go in thereat*. And why ſo few? not, becauſe ſufficient Proviſion is not made for every Man, for Chriſt hath given himſelf a Ranſom for all; but, becauſe much the greater part render themſelves unworthy of that Salvation, and thruſt it away from them, by refuſing to comply with the Com-

Mat. 7. 13.

mands

mands of Repentance and Holineſs, the indiſpenſable Conditions, without which no Man ever did, *ever can ſee the Lord.* If then the Juſtice of God exert it ſelf in ſo terrible a manner, without any prejudice to his Mercy; flatter not thy ſelf any longer, as if, notwithſtanding that Mercy, he may not damn thee for Sins, which thou haſt not only committed with a high Hand, but aggravated with this moſt inexcuſable Aggravation, of making thy preſuming upon that Mercy, an Encouragement and Reaſon for committing them. Heb. 12.

SECT. II.

In what reſpects God's Mercy is greater than his Juſtice.

I expect after all this, that the preſumptous Sinner will find ſome pretence from Scripture it ſelf, as if that were not conſiſtent with this rigour in puniſhing, and the vaſt numbers of them, that periſh everlaſtingly, ſo much ſuperiour to thoſe that are ſaved. For is this poſſible, with him, whoſe *Mercies are over all his Works*, whoſe *Mercy triumpheth over Judgment*; with Him, *who is ſlow to anger, not extreme to mark what is done amiſs*, and who even when he is angry, *repenteth him of the evil, and keepeth not his anger for ever?* To all this it might ſuffice to anſwer in ſhort, that the Scripture is no leſs expreſs, concerning the Narrowneſs of the Gate that leads to Life, and the fewneſs of them that go in at it; and the broadneſs of the Way which leads to Deſtruction, and the vaſt Multitudes of wretched Men that walk in it. Our Lord's Authority in this Point will admit of no Diſ- Mat. 7. 13, 14.

pute; and therefore allowing (as we muſt) the matter of Fact; I ſhall now examine, how the Mercy of God, notwithſtanding all this, does yet come up to all thoſe Characters given of it in Holy Writ.

Firſt, then, The Mercy of God may truly be ſaid to excel his other Attributes, becauſe it is more concerned in the Happineſs of Men, than any, or all the reſt are, in their Miſery and Puniſhment. The Salvation of them that are ſaved is entirely from the Mercy of God; He is the Worker, and the proper and principal Cauſe of it: But the Damnation of them that are loſt, is not properly from God, but from themſelves. *O Iſrael, thou haſt deſtroyed thy ſelf*, ſays the Prophet, *but in me is thy help*. So much in Him, that every good Action we do, every good Thought we think, is to be acknowledged an effect of the Divine Grace and Aſſiſtance. And, though there be a Faculty of Freedom and Choice in theſe Matters, yet does this, in the preſent corrupt State of Humane Nature bind, and of its own accord determine us to will. And all our Good is owing to thoſe ſecret and ſweet Influences of God's bleſſed Spirit, working with our Spirits; preventing and moving, aſſiſting, and overruling our Wills and Affections. So that none of the evil Acts, for which Men are damned, proceed from God; he tempts no Man to Sin, but every Man, when he is tempted, follows his own Luſts, and acts without, and againſt God: But in our Salvation, and the Works, which procure that, we act with, and could not effect them without Him. Herein then Mercy moſt manifeſtly triumphs over Juſtice. Becauſe God crowns his own Works in us, which are not ours entirely

Hoſ. 12.6.

and

and originally, but only with regard to our Concurrence with, and conſent to, his holy Motions; but he damns us for thoſe Miſdemeanors alone, which are in the ſtricteſt Senſe our own, and ſuch as he hath no part, nor the leaſt co-operation in.

Secondly, The Mercy of God exceeds his Juſtice, with regard to the general good Intentions and Deſires, which he hath for the Happineſs of Mankind. For St. *Paul* tells us, that *God would have all men to be ſaved, and to come to the knowledge of the truth*; and himſelf frequently repeats that ſolemn Proteſtation, *As I live ſaith the Lord, I have no pleaſure in the death of a ſinner, but rather, that he ſhould turn from his wickedneſs and live.* Accordingly he gave command that the Goſpel, that *Grace of God which bringeth Salvation unto all Men*, ſhould be *preached to every Creature*, and ordained, that *Jeſus Chriſt ſhould be made a little lower than the Angels*, for this very purpoſe, *that he by the Grace of God ſhould taſt death for every Man.* So that Mercy is the Attribute, which he exerciſes willingly and freely, and this is extended to all without Exception. But the Exerciſe of Juſtice is rather a matter of Neceſſity and Conſtraint, and reſerved for ſuch only, as by their Obſtinacy and undutiful Behaviour, compel him to this Expedient. This our Bleſſed Lord hath expreſs'd in a very plain and moving manner, when he with Tears in his Eyes uttered that affectionate Lamentation over the Holy City. *O that thou hadſt known in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace; but now they are hidden from thine Eyes.* And again. *O Jeruſalem, Jeruſalem, thou that killeſt the Prophets, and ſtoneſt them which are ſent unto thee, how often would I*

1 Tim. 2. Ezek. 18. Jer. 3. Mark. 16. Heb. 2. Luk. 19. Mat. 23.

have gathered thy Children together, even as a Hen gathereth her Chickens under her Wings, and ye would not? Behold your Houſe is left unto you deſolate. Here we have an account of the Mercy of God, tendered to the Jews over and over, and upon their refuſal of theſe gracious Offers, then, and not till then, God betakes himſelf to his Juſtice. And, though the Miſeries he brought upon that inflexible People, prove the Effects of that Juſtice to have been moſt amazing and terrible, yet ſtill his Mercy excels, in thoſe many Methods made uſe of before to reclaim, and prevent them from falling into final Deſtruction. Which had been done effectually, had they not continued Proof againſt all the means of Grace, and drawn down that Ruin upon their own Heads, by rejecting and refuſing their own Happineſs.

Thirdly, The Mercy of God exceeds, even towards the Reprobate themſelves, and thoſe who are never the better by it, in all its Diſpenſations towards them, in this Life at leaſt, while they yet continue in a State of Diſcipline, and Tryal. For, Who can expreſs the infinite Advantages and Opportunities ſuch Men enjoy, and that unconceivable variety of Holy Arts, made uſe of by God, to draw them to himſelf? The enduing Men with a Principle of Free-will at firſt, and putting Life and Death in their own diſpoſal. The aſſiſting that Will with ſupernatural Aſſiſtances to do good; the ſuggeſting to them Holy Thoughts, and checking them inwardly, when they are about to comply with Evil. The inviting and importuning them with affectionate Exhortations, alluring them with Promiſes, encouraging them with Examples, and ſweetning their Duty, with temporal Bleſ-

ſings

ſings and Benefits innumerable. And, when theſe fail of their deſired Effect, having recourſe to other more awakening Methods; humbling them with Sickneſs, with Affliction, with gentle and wiſe Corrections of all ſorts: Giving them ſpace and leiſure to Repent, and furniſhing them with Plenty of occaſions to do good: Terrifying them by Threatnings of eternal Puniſhments, and ſetting before them the diſmal Conſequences of Diſobedience and Obſtinacy, if they will not be prevailed upon to repent and amend. All theſe Diſpenſations, are the natural reſult of Mercy and Kindneſs toward them which render their Obſtinacy inexcuſable, and Force the damned themſelves to confeſs, in the midſt of Tortures and Deſpair, that although the Execution of the Divine Juſtice be moſt ſevere and terrible; yet is it juſt and right; ſuch as might have been avoided, if they would have been wiſe in time; ſuch as bears no Proportion with the exceeding Greatneſs of his Mercy, exhibited to them, while the proper ſeaſon of Mercy laſted; that is, while there was any room left for ſecond and better Thoughts, and the time of living upon Earth made it poſſible for them to reform and improve under it.

Thus then we ſee the Reaſon, why the Scripture ſo often makes mention of the Mercy of God, in conjunction with his Judgments, and his Juſtice, and his Truth; What an exact Agreement there is conſtantly between them, and what influence, the Conſideration of them ought to have upon our Hearts and Lives; which is, to keep us from ſo preſuming upon his Mercy, as not to be afraid of his Juſtice; nor ſo to dread the rigour of his Juſtice, as to deſpair of Mercy. For, in a Chriſtian's Duty, Fear and

Hope ſhould always go hand in hand; and we never find any of the moſt eminent and perfect Saints, ſo tranſported with the latter, as to diſdain, or lay aſide the former. But then, it is neceſſary we diſtinguiſh aright, what ſort of Fear this is; not a ſervile and aſtoniſhing terrour of Mind, but ſuch as produces the excellent Fruits ſo often attributed to it, when it is ſaid, that *by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil*; that this *is the beginning of Wiſdom, and a good underſtanding have they that do thereafter*; that *he who fears the Lord will do good*, and *look well to his ways*, and *prepare his Soul*, and *ſanctify the Lord God in his Heart*, and many other Paſſages of the like importance.

This is the deſcription of that true Godly Fear, ſo frequently enjoyned, ſo highly commended by the Holy Ghoſt: That Fountain of Life, that Principle of true ſaving Knowledge, that Mark and perfection of Religious Wiſdom, that precious Gift of God, and Glory of a good Man. *Bleſſed is the man that feareth the Lord, he hath great delight in his commandments*, ſays the *Pſalmiſt*; and the Son of *Sirach* among many other moſt deſirable Advantages of this Virtue, ſays; *Whoſo feareth the Lord, it ſhall go well with him at the laſt, and he ſhall find favour in the day of his Death.* In ſhort, of ſuch as theſe, we are informed, that God is their Rock and ſure Refuge, that he hath laid up plenteous Goodneſs for them, that he pities, and is as tender of them, as the moſt affectionate Father, of his own deareſt Children; and that God hath his Eyes ever watchful for their Good, that he will hear their Cry, and help them, and fulfil all their Deſire. The want of this Diſpoſition is obſerved by *David* to be the Root of the moſt bold, and impious

Pſal. 112. 1.

Eccleſ. 1. 13.

Pſal. 18. & 31, & 103, & 34, & 145.

Ex-

Extravagances: *The wicked is ſo proud, that he careth not for God, neither is God in all his thoughts. Thy judgments are far above out of his ſight, and therefore defieth he all his Enemies. He ſays in his heart, God hath forgotten; he hideth away his face, and he will never ſee it. Wherefore ſhould the wicked blaſpheme God, while he doth ſay in his heart. Tuſh, thou God careſt not for it?* Pſal. 10.

It is a great diſhonour to Almighty God, and muſt needs exaſperate him highly againſt us, when we rob him of a part of his Nature, and make him that tame and eaſy Being, which would be the reſult of infinite Mercy, without any Mixture of Juſtice; And to live, as though the Judge of all the Earth would never call us to an Account. Whereas he hath not only declared, that he will bring *us into judgment with every ſecret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil*; Eccleſ. 12. but hath likewiſe intimated to us how ſtrict and critical that enquiry will be, by reſembling himſelf to a hard Maſter, who requires his own again with Uſury; Mat. 25. who reckons with every Steward for the waſt he hath made of his Lord's Goods; Luk. 16. who expects an Improvement of all the labour and expence beſtowed upon his Fig-tree, Luk. 13. and who will juſtify or condemn us, not by our Actions only, but by our very Words, and Thoughts, and the hidden things of Virtue or Diſhoneſty. Mar. 12. 1 Cor. 4.

In that Prophetick Complaint of *David*, which by many Applications made of it to our Bleſſed Lord, both by himſelf and his Apoſtles, we cannot reaſonably doubt, but it was principally intended of Jeſus Chriſt, we may take notice, that among the Curſes and Calamities there denounced againſt the Enemies of the Meſſias, (and ſuch are all wicked Perſons) there are theſe

Pſal. 69. theſe among many others. *Let their Eyes be darkened that they ſee not. Pour out thy thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them. Add iniquity unto their iniquity, and let them not come into thy righteouſneſs. Let them be blotted out of the Book of the Living, and not be written among the righteous.* I mention this, to ſhew, that the greateſt Curſe God can lay upon thoſe he hates, next to the blotting them abſolutely out of the Book of Life, and conſigning them over irreverſibly to eternal Damnation, is, the ſuffering them to bind one Sin upon another, and to go on ſecurely, without being reſtrained by any Conſideration of the Righteouſneſs and Juſtice of Almighty God. And hence it is, that thoſe Divines, which extend the Sin of the Holy Ghoſt beyond that Caſe of which our Saviour ſpeaks, have placed Preſumption in the foremoſt Rank of thoſe unpardonable Offences, which fell within this Cenſure. And, the Reaſon they give for looking upon this to be a Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, is, that it wilfully rejects, and utterly defeats one of the moſt powerful means made uſe of by the Spirit of God for reclaiming, and containing us in our Duty, which is the dread of God's angry Juſtice upon impenitent Sinners.

We may then, in my apprehenſion, apply St. *Paul's* Argument, relating to the Temporal Power of Civil Magiſtrates, to the Juſtice and eternal Vengeance of the great King and Judge
Rom. 13. of the whole World. *Wilt thou not be afraid of the Power? do that which is good, and thou ſhalt have praiſe of the ſame. But if thou do that which is evil, be afraid; for he beareth not the Sword in vain, but executh wrath upon him that doth evil.* The only way to have a good Confidence and

true

true peace of Mind, is to live ſo well, that we ſhall not be under any juſt apprehenſions of God's being angry with us. For as St. *John* ſays, *Perfect Love caſteth out fear*, that is, ſuch a fear as haunts us with expectations of Vengeance, and is a perpetual Torment to the Mind. But, if Men will ſtill perſiſt in their evil Habits, it is the moſt unreaſonable thing in the World, for ſuch to flatter themſelves, and live void of fear; For God frequently calls himſelf a juſt Judge, and theſe are not Words of Courſe and Form, not an empty Title, that ſignifies nothing; but ſuch a Character as he will be ſure to make good to the uttermoſt. 1 Joh. 4.

If this had been a matter of ſo little hazard, or importance, as too many ſecure People fondly perſwade themſelves; Can we imagine, that St. *Peter* would ever have given that ſolemn Exhortation to the Converts, to whom he addreſs'd his Epiſtle, *If ye call on the Father, who without reſpect of perſons judgeth according to every Man's work, paſs the time of your ſojourning here in fear.* Or would St. *Paul* have urged his *Philippians*, to *work out their Salvation with Fear and Trembling?* I acknowledge, that the Apoſtle does indeed in another Place repreſent this, as a Priviledge peculiar to Chriſtians, that *God hath not given unto us the Spirit of fear, but of power, and love, and of a ſound mind.* But the meaning of that and other Paſſages of like import, is only this. That the Spirit of the Goſpel is not of the ſame ſervile kind, with that of the Law, where Men were dealt with like Servants; and Fear was the chief and governing Principle; for which Reaſon this is elſewhere termed the *Spirit of Bondage*; But ours is the *Spirit of Adoption*, and we are treated like Sons. But what 1 Pet. 1. 17. Phil. 2. 12. 2 Tim. 1. 7. Rom. 8. 15. Gal. 4. 5.

then?

then? Is there no Fear belonging to the Duty of Children? Yes certainly; A filial Fear, mixt with Love; and no leſs cautious of offending their Father than the Slave is of incurring the Diſpleaſure of the moſt abſolute and tyrannical Maſter. Only here is the Difference, that theſe two ſorts of Perſons obey upon different Motives; The one merely from Puniſhment, without regard to the Perſon he ſerves; farther than as his Anger may be of miſchievous Conſequence; the Other, out of an affectionate Reverence for the Perſon obeyed, a grateful Senſe of his great Goodneſs, and the Baſeneſs of doing any thing, which may give diſguſt to One, who hath ſhewed himſelf ſo bountiful and indulgent, and ought to have a more ſuitable return made for his Love.

So that the conſidering God and our ſelves under the Capacity of Parent and Children, as it intimates the Honour and Advantage of this ſpiritual and moſt noble Relation, ſo does it likewiſe give another turn and temper to our Actions, and renders our Service cheerful and delightful, and full of reverence and affectionate Deſire to pleaſe; in a Word it qualifies our Fear with Love. This is no doubt St. *Paul's* intention in that known Paſſage, *You have not received the Spirit of Bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of Adoption, whereby we cry Abba-Father.* And conſequently, you have now another and better Reaſon for doing what God commands, than either the Jews went upon to their true God, or the Heathens to their falſe Gods; Who, generally ſpeaking, only honoured the Deity, they adored, for fear it ſhould hurt them if they did otherwiſe. This ſlaviſh terrour of Mind is therefore a Principle,

unfit

unfit for the dignity of a Chriſtian, who is admitted to ſo high a Relation, and ſuch glorious Proſpects; and of that ſervile Diſpoſition we are to underſtand thoſe Texts of the New Teſtament, which forbid us to ſerve God out of Fear. For the right underſtanding whereof there are however Two Things to be obſerved.

The *Firſt* is, that though this be a Spirit, in which we are not allowed to reſt finally, as the only and beſt Motive of a Chriſtian Obedience. Yet is it, not only a lawful, but exceeding uſeful Motive, to ſet out upon; and ſuch, as commonly is the firſt Conſideration, which awakens Sinners to Repentance, and makes them look about them. Hence is it, with great Propriety, of Expreſſion, termed *The Beginning of Wiſdom.* And therefore you find the old Prophets among the Jews; *Jonas* in his Embaſſy to the *Ninivites*, and *John Baptiſt* to thoſe who reſorted to his Baptiſm, all of them, exciting hardned Sinners to amendment, by ſetting before them the imminent Dangers and Puniſhments, which muſt otherwiſe overtake them. The conſtant Burden of all their Exhortations is in effect the ſame with that in the Third of St. *Matthew*, *And now, behold, the Ax is laid unto the root of the Tree; every Tree therefore that bringeth not forth good Fruit is hewn down, and caſt into the Fire.* But, when Men are convinced of the Neceſſity of this Change, have entred in, and made ſome Progreſs, and are acquainted with the ways of Holineſs; When they can look up to God, no longer as a provoked Judge, but now, as a reconciled Father and Friend, then they find the filial Affection growing, and getting Ground, till at laſt they come to that poſture of Soul, meant by St. *John*, when he ſays,

1 John 4. *perfect love caſteth out fear.* Upon which St. *Au-*
Tract. 9. in *guſtin's* remark is, that *Fear is in the quality of a*
1. Ep. Jo- *Servant, ſent before to make Way, and fit up a Room*
an. *for it's Miſtreſs, Love; in the Hearts of them that ſerve God.* And, *when the Miſtreſs comes to take poſſeſſion, the Servant having done his Buſineſs, modeſtly retires. But where this Fear does not come at all, and open the Paſſage, there it is impoſſible for the Love of God to take up it's Dwelling.*

The *Second* Thing, fit to be obſerved upon this Occaſion, is, that, though Men very perfect are leſs ſenſible of this Fear, than others, or have almoſt quite ſhook it off; yet it is ſo incorporated with their Love and Reverence for God, as to be exceeding profitable, and even neceſſary, for all Chriſtians, whoſe Life is not ſo perfect, nor Charity ſo fervent, as that mentioned by St. *John.* They were Men of no mean Character, to whom our Bleſſed Savi-
Luk. 12. 5. our gave that direction, *Fear him, who after he hath killed the Body, hath Power to caſt both Body and Soul into Hell, yea, I ſay unto you, Fear him.* And St. *Paul* to his *Corinthians*, thought it no diſparagement to their Proficiency, to urge them
2 Cor. 5. 10, 11. upon this Motive to Obedience. *We muſt all appear before the Judgment-Seat of Chriſt, that every one may receive the Things done in his Body, according to that he hath done, whether it be Good or Bad: Knowing therefore the Terror of the Lord, we perſwade Men.* Nay, he is ſo far from ſuppoſing, that the Apprehenſions of this kind were unworthy of thoſe new Converts, as even to declare, that he himſelf was not without ſome Concern, leſt he ſhould miſcarry at laſt, and that he made this an Incentive to his Mortification and Perſeverance. For what elſe can we gather from that very remarkable Paſſage,

I

I keep under my Body, and bring it into Subjection, leſt that by any Means, when I have preached to others, I my ſelf ſhould be a Caſt-away. 1 Cor. 9. 27.

ſince then, that eminent Pattern of Chriſtian Perfection, St. *Paul* himſelf, notwithſtanding his great Prerogatives above common Believers, was not however, wholly void of this awful Senſe of God's Juſtice; ſince he, who declares he knew nothing, by himſelf, yet did not think he was thereby juſtified, but waited, with a becoming Humility, for the Judgment of that Lord, who muſt finally pronounce upon him; What manner of Men, ought thoſe to whom I am at preſent addreſſing my ſelf, to be? How very apprehenſive of the Divine Vengeance, whoſe Conſciences Reproach them, with ſo many, ſo grievous Offences; for which, if they know any Thing at all of Religion, they muſt be convinced, that a very ſevere and exemplary Vengeance is due? *For this* (ſays St. *Paul* to the *Epheſians*) *ye know, that no Whoremonger, nor unclean Perſon, nor covetous Man, who is an Idolater, hath any Inheritance in the Kingdom of Chriſt, and of God.* And immediately after, to drive this Warning deeper, and prevent that fatal ſecurity, with which, either others who ſtrive to entice us to Sin, or our own treacherous Hearts by their own naughty Suggeſtions, are exceeding apt to flatter us: he adds, *Let no Man deceive you with vain Words; for becauſe of theſe Things cometh the Wrath of God upon the Children of Diſobedience. Be not ye therefore partakers with them.* 1 Cor. 4. Eph. 5. 5. V. 6, 7.

It ſeems then, whoever they be, that would perſwade us, that ſuch Practices, as theſe, will be pardoned, and eaſily paſſed by; Whoever relies upon the Mercies of God for eſcaping the Puniſhment due to them; Theſe Men deceive

us,

us, and if we rely upon this Opinion, we Build without any Foundation. They who commit ſuch Things are Children of *Diſobedience*; or, as the Word might properly enough be rendred, Children of *Unbelief*; For the great occaſion of their acting in ſuch Contradiction to God's Commands, is, the want of a through Conviction, and ſerious Senſe, of his Juſtice and his Threatning. And hence they are emboldened to proceed in a raſh Preſumption upon his Mercy; till at laſt they have provoked God beyond all Patience, and his Anger breaks out upon them, like a Fire, not to be quenched, till it have utterly conſumed them. The Apoſtle's Advice therefore in this Caſe, is, not to *partake* with ſuch Men in their Folly; not to act as they do, and, for the prevention of this, not to think as they do. But, to conſider, that Anger and Judgment are with God, as well as Goodneſs and Mercy; that, if we will not fear theſe, while that may be profitable to our Reformation, we ſhall feel and periſh under them, when it will be too late to amend. And I cannot conclude this Chapter better, than to deſire every one of my Readers, that he would ſeriouſly lay to Heart the Apoſtle's Advice to theſe *Epheſians*, and make their Caſe his own. As it will moſt certainly be, in one reſpect or other: For, either he will conſider this Wrath of God, and come to a ſpeedy Reformation for prevention of it; or elſe he will continue among the Children of Diſobedience, incredulous and obſtinate, refuſing or deferring his Holy Purpoſes of Amendment, upon a vain imagination, that God's Goodneſs is never to be wearied out with Provocations; and then that Wrath will moſt aſſuredly come upon

on him, to his utter Deſtruction of Body and Soul.

CHAP. VI.

A Sixth Impediment to Holy Reſolution. Deferring our Repentance out of a vain Hope of doing it to better Advantage hereafter.

THE Reaſons already urged for Repentance are ſo cogent, and the Neceſſity of amending our Lives, at one time or other, ſo very apparent; that few, or none, who give themſelves leave to think at all, find it poſſible to evade them. But ſtill, as Men will never want ſome pretence againſt what they are loth to do, there is another Fallacy in this Matter, no leſs dangerous than any of the former. That, I mean, of putting off to a farther Day, a work which even they who delay it, profeſs very heartily to intend, and firmly reſolve upon. But ſtill, this Day is made longer, and more diſtant, till at laſt Almighty God, in whoſe Hands all the Periods of our Time are, do at laſt ſhut them out from any future Opportunities, and ſend ſuch Wretches to ſuffer the Pains of a miſerable Eternity, in the next, who have abuſed the precious Talent of Time entruſted with them in this preſent World. Thus are Men frequently prevented, and overtaken with the Divine Juſtice, and have neither the Leiſure, they fondly promiſe to themſelves, for growing better, nor the Pardon of their paſt Offences, in conſideration of a bare Intention to forſake them. And it may very truly be affirmed, that more Souls periſh by this one

Deceit, than by all the other Snares and Subtleties of the Devil beſides. He underſtands perfectly well, how nicely this Cheat is calculated; how likely to ſucceed; and therefore, he plyes it above any other; and is content, people ſhould Deſign well, provided he can but ſtave them off from putting thoſe Deſigns in Execution.

He conſiders much better, than we our ſelves are wont to do, of what fatal Conſequence delays are in a Matter ſo abſolutely neceſſary, and of ſuch high Importance, as our Converſion and Salvation. He ſees, how one Sin makes way for, and draws on another, and a greater; that the Man, who is not ready and fit to day, will be much leſs ſo to morrow; that Cuſtom gets Ground, and grows into Nature; that inveterate Diſeaſes are not to be cured without much Difficulty, and a very painful Application; that God withdraws that Grace, which Men neglect to uſe, and without which they cannot reform; that his Juſtice and Truth are irrevocably engaged, for the Puniſhment of every Crime unrepented of; and that our Delays exaſperate, and arm that Juſtice againſt our ſelves. He is duly ſenſible of the Hazards and uncertainty of this frail Life of ours; how many ſurpriſing and unſeen Accidents lie in wait to deſtroy it every Day and Hour; how faſt the Obſtructions to do Good multiply upon us; and, though we ſhould be ſpared, and be allowed ſpace, yet how wretchedly the Diſpoſition to repent will decay in us.

All theſe Things our Ghoſtly Enemy is thoroughly appriſed of; He gives theſe Reaſons their due weight, though we do not; and the Arguments, which cannot prevail upon us to haſten

haſten our Converſion, move him effectually, to find means of protracting it. Men, that are Chriſtians at all, cannot be ſo blind, as not to ſee, that Repentance is eſtabliſhed, as an indiſpenſable Condition of their Safety and Happineſs. And it is not hard for them to ſatisfy their own Conſciences, that the Objections and Difficulties in bar to a Religious Life, are by no means a Balance againſt the Advantages of it. It is therefore to little purpoſe, to attack Men in a Way, ſo manifeſtly contrary to their own Reaſon. But he hath one reſerve left, and takes refuge in this Perſwaſion, to delay, at laſt; He keeps theſe Truths from entring any farther than Speculation; and poſſeſſes them with an Imagination, that ſome more favourable opportunity will offer hereafter, for putting them in Practice. So that, whatever inconveniences they find at preſent, in changing their courſe of Life, it is but having Patience, and waiting a little longer, till they are gone off; and then they ſhall be able to become new Creatures, with all the Eaſe and Advantage imaginable.

This Cheat St. *Auguſtin* complains of from his own Experience. For, after a full Conviction, that no Salvation was to be obtained without amendment of Life, yet he was not free, in ſetting about that amendment. There was one, ever and anon ſuggeſting to him, *ſtay a little longer*, and *ſtill a little longer*, till at laſt he found there was no end of this Seducement; And when the Firſt, and Second, Period was come, the ſame Importunity was renewed for a Third and a Fourth; and would have been ſo for ever, had not he taken up a noble Reſolution, fallen in with the Aſſiſtances of Grace, and

manfully burſt through his Chains at once; with that moſt rational Reflection: *Why ſhould I ſay to Morrow any more? What I am ſenſible muſt be done, why ſhould I not do it this very inſtant?* And this indeed was the only Method of doing his great Affair with Succeſs.

Were we but willing to detect the Fallacy and Danger of this Temptation, there would need no other Conſideration, to manifeſt it to us, than only this; That, whatever Objections we ſuppoſe to lie againſt our Good Reſolutions and effectual Reformation at preſent, will not abate, but daily grow upon us, and gather Strength by delay. And conſequently, whatever difficulty we may find in the Undertakeing, to diſcourage us now, Matters will be but the worſe, at any time, that we can poſſibly propoſe to our ſelves hereafter.

1. The longer we continue in Sin, the greater will the Power of Cuſtom be upon us; And, when once evil Habits come to plead Preſcription, it will be a hard Thing to overthrow them. In this I may appeal to every Man's own Experience, who hath made the Tryal upon Drunkenneſs, or Uncleanneſs, or Swearing, or any other Sin, which he had long been accuſtomed to. And, if he found it ſo laborious an attempt, to root out any old Vice thoroughly; let him from thence make a Judgment, how much Delays muſt needs add to the Difficulty of abandoning all ſorts of Vice, and becoming a new Man in every point.

2. Again, Theſe Habits are to be vanquiſhed, only by the aſſiſtance of God's Grace; and this is ſuſpended upon certain Conditions: One of which is, to be withdrawn from them, who do not improve it to the Purpoſes, for

which

which it was given. So that, by our deferring to change our wicked Courſes, we do not only increaſe the Difficulty, and cut our ſelves out every Day more and more Work to do; but we loſe the only means of finiſhing that Work, and forfeit the Advantages, without which the Converſion, we pretend to make is, ſo far from being rendred eaſier, that it becomes, not ſo much as practicable.

3. And farther yet, as the Power of Grace abates, ſo does that of Sin, and the Dominion of the Tyrant and Enemy of Souls, gain Ground upon us. He by Degrees will enlarge and eſtabliſh his Uſurpation, till it advance into an arbitrary and abſolute Government: exceeding hard, and by our own proper force, impoſſible to be diſpoſſeſſed again.

4. It is likewiſe to be remembred, that, although we have by Nature a Principle of Freedom and Choice, yet is there not any Thing in the World more warped by Degrees than the Will of Man; It tends ſtrongly to ſuch Things, as Cuſtom and frequent Repetition have left it inclining to. This is the Caſe, even in Virtuous Actions, and Good Diſpoſitions, where we go againſt the grain of natural Corruptions; But in Evil and Vicious Cuſtoms, the Reaſon is a great deal ſtronger; becauſe here Cuſtom is ſeconded by Inclination. And therefore, they who abandon themſelves to the frequent commiſſion of Sin, do go as far as it is poſſible to go, to fix this Will down to one ſort of Object, and even extinguiſh the Privilege of chooſing in their Minds.

5. Nor is this the Unhappineſs of the Will only, but all our other intellectual Faculties are depraved and debauched, by cuſtomary ſinning.

The Underſtanding is darkned, and leſs capable of diſcerning; The Judgment is bribed, and perverted, and leſs impartial in determining; The Affections have a more fatal Byaſs put upon them, and the Appetite is every Day more diſorderly and extravagant, in its Motions and Deſires. In a word, All a Man's ſenſual Parts and Paſſions grow more heady and exorbitant, are more bold and mutinous, ſhake off the Yoke of Reaſon and Religion, and are more impatient of reſtraint, the longer they are indulged, and connived at, in this Rebellion.

Let any Man now lay all theſe Things together, and then let him ſtate the Matter indifferently, and ſee, whether he can ſuffer his Judgment to be ſo groſly impoſed upon, as once to imagine, that it is more likely, his good Reſolutions ſhould take better Effect hereafter, than they may do at preſent: Hereafter, I ſay, when Cuſtom ſhall have got more Power, and Sin have taken deeper Root; When the Devil ſhall have ſettled himſelf in his Poſſeſſion; When the Aſſiſtances and Recruits of Grace ſhall be drawn off, and the Man left to Combat with a ſtronger Enemy, and a leſs Force; When thy Soul is more diſtempered, and the Infection hath ſpread it ſelf through every Part; When the Judgment is depraved, the Will perverted, the Underſtanding muffled up, the Good Inclinations grown cold and languiſhing, the Paſſions enflamed, the Body and its Senſes corrupted, the Strength ſpent, and all the Man in a general diſorder.

Do not we ſee by Experience, that the only Way to preſerve a leaky Ship, is to pump out the Water, and to clear the Hold, and ſtop the Leaks with all poſſible Speed? Do we not find,

find, that the longer any Houſe is ſuffered to run to Ruin, the more Trouble and Expence it will coſt to Repair it? Is it not evident, that the more Blows we give the Nail, the faſter hold it takes, and the more Pains muſt be taken to draw out again that which was ſo far driven in? And is not the Caſe the very ſame, when we bind one Sin upon another, and by Perſeverance ſuffer Vice to be ſo ſtrongly riveted into our Souls; And is not the Abſurdity as manifeſt, when Men, thus aggravating their Miſery, do it upon a Pretence of finding eaſier Redreſs, when Matters are worſe with them?

This puts me in mind of a certain Emblematical Repreſentation of this Matter, related in an old Author by way of Viſion, to a certain Hermit. The manner whereof is as follows. A Labourer was hewing Wood, and had made up a large Burden, which he deſigned to carry off upon his Back: But, finding it too much for him to carry, he threw it down again, and heaped-on a great deal more. Then he tryed at it again, but feeling it now much more above his Strength, than before; and falling into a Rage, he threw on twice the Quantity; hoping, by this means, to make it at laſt portable. The Perſon to whom this was repreſented ſtood amazed at this wretched Man's Stupidity; till informed, that all that Figure was a moſt exact Image of the ſenſeleſs and ridiculous Behaviour of Sinners; Who, becauſe they are encountred with ſome uneaſineſs in getting quit of a few evil Habits at the beginning, put off their Repentance, and add to their own Burden, by contracting a much deeper Guilt; and conſequently they draw upon themſelves the neceſſity of a much more laborious amendment, than their

Circumſtances required, before this additional weight of Sin, had rendred that more difficult, which they, in deſpight of Reaſon and common Senſe, flattered themſelves with a vain Thought of rendring more eaſy by this means.

St. *Auguſtin*, in his Expoſition of the Eleventh of St. *John*, takes notice, that in raiſing *Lazarus* from the Dead, our Saviour ſhews more Signs of Difficulty, and vehemence of Effort, than in any other of his Miracles. He Prays, he Weeps, he Groans, he is troubled in Spirit, and yet others he reſtored to Life with all the Eaſe imaginable, one ſingle, one authoritative Word. Now the ground of the Difference is in the time of *Lazarus* continuing dead; he was buried, he had lain Four Days, and Putrefaction had paſſed upon him. Not after all, that even theſe extraordinary Circumſtances were any check upon Omnipotence; to which all things are equally poſſible; equally eaſy: But our Lord was pleaſed to uſe more ſolemnity in this, than in common Miracles, for the ſake of that myſtical Interpretation and Reſemblance it carries, to Men *dead in Treſpaſſes and Sins*. Who, when the Four Degrees of ſinful Aggravations have paſſed upon them, when they delight in, conſent to, actually execute, and by frequent repetition habituate themſelves to, and long perſiſt in, Wickedneſs; When a Sinner I ſay is thus buried, and ſpiritual Corruption hath thus paſſed upon him; Such a one is with great Difficulty raiſed to Life again: And, whenever he is ſo, 'tis by moſt miraculous Mercy on God's part, and many Tears, and Groans, and deep anguiſh of Spirit, on his own.

The Reaſon of this is obvious, and in Nature it cannot be otherwiſe. For the longer any Diſ-

Diſeaſe continues, the more obſtinate it grows; and cannot be removed, like a Sickneſs taken in time, and before the Maſs is vitiated. And, if this be ſo, what a Madneſs is it to put off Repentance and Amendment to old Age, or a Bed of Languiſhing; eſpecially when, beſides the prevalence of the Diſtemper, that very Age and Infirmity will add yet more, to the difficulty and hazard of the Cure? For, if we think it grievous to Repent now, to Faſt, and Pray, to afflict our Souls, and mortify our Bodies, in the vigour of Youth, How ſhall we be able to do it, when Years or Impotence have brought us ſo low, that all we can do will ſcarce ſuffice to cheriſh and ſupport us? If, after Two, or Three, or Four Years continuance, the Torrent of our ſinful Affections can hardly be reſiſted, how impetuous a Tide muſt we expect to bear down upon us, after a Twenty Years longer Indulgence? Would you not think that Traveller forſaken of common Senſe, who having a heavy Baggage to carry, and choice of Horſes ſtrong, and in good Caſe, ſhould make uſe of none of theſe, but lay his Load upon ſome poor, underlimbed, jaded Beaſt, that can ſcarce carry it ſelf? And yet that Man acts every whit as unreaſonably, that waſts his Strength in Jollity, and reſerves the laborious part of his Life, to that Condition, which hath much ado to ſuſtain its own natural Weakneſs.

But I have ſomething elſe of conſiderable Moment to urge, beſides the Indiſcretion and extreme Folly, of ſo prepoſterous a Courſe. Think then, I beſeech you, how manifeſtly unjuſt, how baſely ungrateful, we are to Almighty God, from whom we have already received ſo many and ſo valuable Bleſſings in hand, and pre-

pretend to expect ſo glorious a Reward, as the Kingdom of Heaven hereafter, to put him off with the leaſt, and laſt, and worſt part of our Life; and to aſſign him only that which it is very uncertain, whether we ſhall ever have in our Power to pay. Think, whether he, who claims, and hath an undoubted Right to, and deſerves, the Whole of our time, will be ſatisfied with ſuch a wretched Remnant of it, if ever it ſhould be at our own diſpoſal. We find God, by his Prophet, declaring thoſe Men accurſed, who when they have whole and ſound Cattle, offer the
Mal. 1. *Blind*, and the *Lame*, and reſerve that only for Sacrifice, which is good for nothing elſe. And ſhall not we moſt juſtly fall under the ſame Condemnation; if, while we have plenty of Youth and Health, all this be ſquandred away in the extravagance of our own Luſts, and nothing, but a feeble maimed old Age, be devoted to his Service?

We find it forbidden in the old Law, to have two different Meaſures, the one, to ſell by to a Friend, the other, to an Enemy; The Iniquity, I am now reproving, is yet more notorious. Here Men mete out their Lives by two moſt different and unequal Meaſures; They do it in prejudice to themſelves, and to their Rightful Owner. To God, their beſt Friend, they allot the ſhort, the decrepit, the uncertain Seaſon of Gray Hairs, and feeble Limbs, and decayed Parts; to his and their own Enemy, the World, and the Devil, they are Liberal, nay, even Profuſe, and give them the much greater, the better, the ſurer Meaſure, of a ſtout and robuſt Body, of ſprightly Wit, and a ſound Underſtanding. And how muſt this be needs
Prov 11. reſented, by him who declares a falſe Ballance

lance an Abomination, and a true weight his Delight?

What reaſon can the moſt partial Man in the World frame to himſelf, why God ſhould take this uſage at our Hands; or if he would condeſcend to take, why we ſhould offer it to him? What colour of Juſtice or Equity is there, why, when the World, and the Fleſh, and the Devil, which we ſolemnly renounce at the inſtant of our being made Chriſtians, have had the beſt and choice of our Time, and our Pains, we ſhould think to thruſt our old Bones, worn out with the Drudgery of Sin, upon God, and have the impudence to make him a Preſent of their leavings? Muſt his Enemies be regaled with the Wine, and can we find in our Heart to entertain him with only the dregs and laſt droppings of the Veſſel? Do we not know, that he reſerved the firſt of all Sacrifices for the Altar, and what was the meaning of this Ordinance, but, that God requires the very beſt of what we have, to be dedicated to his Uſe and Service? Be wiſer then for ſhame, and follow that advice of the Preacher, *Remember now thy Creatour in the days of thy Youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou ſhalt ſay, I have no pleaſure in them.* Eccleſ. 12. 1.

But here again, Think once more, what will be thy Fate, if this time, which thou thus unjuſtly reſerveſt for God, ſhould never come at all. Reflect with thy ſelf, how many thy own Eyes have ſeen cut off in the midſt of their Days; and ſurprized with Death, before their purpoſes of Reformation came to any effect: How many Examples of another kind canſt thou recollect, of Men who propoſed and promiſed to be wondrous Good, when they grow Old, and yet,

yet, though ſuffered to arrive at that Age, were even then, as little diſpoſed to amend, and as ſollicitous to find out freſh excuſes for putting the day of Repentance ſtill far from them, as ever they were, in the heat and gayety of Youth? How many unhappy Miſcreants have driven off this neceſſary Work, till the very Hour of Death; and when that Hour drew on, have ſhewed as little ſigns of remembring their own Condition, as they did formerly in the moſt perfect Health? Alas! there are too many, who dye no leſs like Brutes than they had lived all along; and, after forgetting God the reſt of their time, forget themſelves as much in theſe laſt Moments. O would to God the Wickedneſs of the preſent Age did not furniſh us with too frequent Inſtances of this fatal Stupidity! But the more of theſe we ſee, the leſs excuſable ſhall we be at laſt, if their Miſery be not our warning. One would be almoſt tempted to imagine, that the ſenſual and worldly Wretches, who live in ſuch open defiance of Chriſtianity, had never heard of any other place after this World, nor once been told of any Account to be rendred of their Behaviour while in the Body: When they feel Death approach, they are very nice and careful in making their Wills, in diſpoſing of their Eſtates, as if theſe being well ſettled would affect them after they are gone: But what ſhall become of their great, their only Treaſure, their precious immortal Soul, they ſeem as little concerned, as if in reality there were no ſuch thing. And no doubt, as they dye like Men of this Perſwaſion, ſo ſhall they live to all Eternity, abandoned to all thoſe Miſeries they expreſs'd no concern to avoid, and deprived of all that Bliſs

and

and Glory, which they never thought it worth their while to be at any trouble to obtain.

But I have not done with this Argument even yet. I will put the very faireſt of the Caſe, and (ſetting aſide all the former Reaſons, which yet I aſſure my ſelf are unanſwerable) am content for once to ſuppoſe, that the Buſineſs of Repentance could be performed as eaſily, as conveniently, as certainly in Old Age, or Sickneſs, as it can be in a more eaſy, or more vigorous Seaſon of our Lives. I will ſuppoſe too, that God will not fail to accept it, and make it effectual. Yet, even upon theſe Terms, what Man in his Wits, who believes the Goſpel-Covenant, would put things upon this Iſſue? For do but conſider how much Time here is loſt, how many Opportunities ſlipt, and how many good Works omitted, which might have added infinitely to the value of our Service, and the degrees of our Happineſs. In Matters of worldly Advantage, every one is eager to be in with the foremoſt, and no one cares to ſtay for the refuſe of the Market. If a wealthy City were to be ſacked, no Soldier is ſo mortified to the Thoughts of Booty, to let his Fellows plunder to day, and take up with that little of the worſt of the Spoil, which ſhall be left to Morrow: No prudent Man, that thought to make his Fortune, would manage himſelf at this rate. Now *the Kingdom of Heaven*, (as our Bleſſed Lord expreſſes it) *ſuffers violence, and the violent take it by force.* The Good and Zealous Chriſtians crowd in with a holy Emulation, and every one is eager to enrich himſelf with the beſt of the Spoil; that is, they labour by abounding in good Works here, to lay up and ſecure to themſelves ſo much the greater Treaſure hereafter. They know

Mat. 11.

know that *according as every man ſows, ſo ſhall he alſo reap*; and therefore they loſe no time, but *ſow plenteouſly, that they may reap plenteouſly.* And is it not a moſt wretched folly, a moſt perverſe Negligence in us, to be contented with a leſs when we may attain to a higher, and a brighter Crown? Do we pretend to think Heaven our Happineſs, and ſhall we not labour to be as
2 Cor. 6. 2. happy as poſſibly we can? *Now then*, as the Apoſtle ſays, *is the accepted time; now is the day of Salvation.* Now is the Seaſon of fighting, if we would be glorious Conquerours; now is the time of taking the Spoil, if we deſire Treaſure in Heaven; now is the ſale of that Pearl of great price, if we would approve our ſelves wiſe Merchants; now is the Seed time, if we hope for a joyful Harveſt. If we let this time ſlip through our Fingers, our Laurels will fade, our Sale will be over, our Booty will be taken out of our Hands, our Seaſon of Sowing will be paſt; In a Word, that Obſervation of the wiſe Man, would do well to be applyed to this Mat-
Prov. 10. 6. ter in a ſpiritual Senſe, *He that gathereth in Summer is a wiſe Son, but he that ſleepeth in Harveſt is a Son that cauſeth ſhame.*

But, if this Conſideration have not its due weight, neither (and what weight indeed ought not a Conſideration to have, which concerns a thing of infinite Importance, and a Doom irrevocable to all Eternity?) Yet at leaſt, think how much a greater Debt thou contracteſt, and what freſh Obligations every day intangle thee in, when thy Converſion is deferred, and a larger Arrear of Sin charged upon thy Conſcience. This is tying Knots every hour, and contriving new Intricacies, which muſt one day be all unravelled again: 'Tis like loading

loading thy Stomach with Meat ſure to make thee Sick; and ſuch as muſt be diſgorged, or it will coſt thee thy Life. That is, heaping together new Matter for Sorrow, for deeper remorſe, for more confounding ſhame; 'tis doing, that which thou wouldſt one day give the World it had never been done: 'Tis ſo, I mean allowing the beſt of the Caſe, that thou do repent before it be too late, and that God accept thy Repentance; but otherwiſe Wo, eternal Wo to thee, for thou heapeſt up Wrath, and Vengeance, and Torments unſpeakable, upon thy poor Soul for ever and ever. But I ſay, ſuppoſing thou, have hereafter thoſe offers of Grace renewed to thee, which thou moſt ungratefully refuſeſt now; yet this Laughter muſt be paid for in abundance of Tears, thy Heart muſt then bleed, every Vein of it, for thoſe ſinful Pleaſures, in which it now revels with ſuch a frantick Delight; and, if thou do not curſe the day, in which thou mighteſt have repented, but wouldſt not, thy Repentance will ſtand thee in no ſtead. This, if thou art a Chriſtian, thou knoweſt before-hand, and what a madneſs is it then, deliberately and in cold Blood, to contrive ſo vaſt an increaſe to thy own Sorrow? If thou think, that God will pardon thee, and this Preſumption give thee Confidence to perſiſt in offending him, what horrid Ingratitude is this, to ſo gracious a Lord? If thou imagine there is no Forgiveneſs in ſtore for thee, what deſperate Fool-hardineſs is this, thus to tempt thy everlaſting Ruin, by provoking a God, who is an avenger of Evil, and whoſe Power is ſo unlimited, that he can puniſh thee at his Pleaſure, beyond what thou art able to think or fear?

So

So that let the Sinner put the Caſe any way, it will ſtill be againſt him. If he never Repents, every Sin he commits is heaping freſh Fewel upon his own Head, and heating his Furnace ſeven times hotter than before. If he does, yet he muſt one day lament and be deeply afflicted for this very delay, and ſo he does a thing, which he muſt either periſh by, or moſt heartily wiſh undone again. The amends he endeavours to make by his Sorrow, muſt bear proportion to the heinouſneſs and the number of his Sins, to the Power of his Habits, and the length of his paſt wicked Courſes. And the deeper the Sore is, the deeper muſt be the Inciſion, and the more painful the Plaiſter that ſearches and cleanſes it from an inveterate Corruption. For it is not enough to leave our Sins, unleſs we do it with ſuch marks of Humiliation and Contrition, as expreſs a juſt Indignation at our own Folly, as does in ſome Senſe execute the Puniſhment due to a them upon our ſelves, and ſhew, that were it in our Power, we are deſirous to make Satisfaction to that Goodneſs and Honour of God, which our Offences have injured and abuſed, according to the Meaſure of thoſe Indignities we put upon him.

Thus a long Habit of Evil, muſt have a long Repentance; a deep Guilt requires a deep Remorſe. And, would any Man of ſober Thought tear open his Wounds after this manner, when he knows, that the Conſequence of enflaming them muſt be, to be healed with a ſharper Corroſive, and a more tedious Application? Can there in the World be a more unnatural Cruelty, than thus to drive Thorns into our own Fleſh, which will be ſure to feſter, and if they do not gangrene and prove Mortal, cannot however be drawn out

again,

again, without insupportable Anguish? Should we not think that Man fit for *Bedlam*, that to gratify his Palate, would drink of a poisoned Cup, when he was fairly warned of the Ingredients before, and certainly convinced, that a raging Fever will follow upon it; that either his Life must pay for the Pleasure, or his Bowels be rackt and torn with infinite Torture to save it? If this be not Folly, if this be not Phrenzy, we are yet at a loss what can deserve to be called so. And if this be not the true stating of the Sinner's Case, who puts off his Repentance to a long Day, in a vain Confidence, of finding it more for his Convenience, to enjoy the Delights of Sin in the mean while, and of repenting upon easier terms then, I appeal to every impartial Reader. *Remember this therefore and shew your selves Men, call it again to mind, O ye Transgressors.* Isa 46. 8.

Sect. II.

The Example of the Thief pardoned upon the Cross considered. And the Doubtfulness of a Sinner's Conversion at his Death.

THE Sinner, there is little doubt, will not yet give up his treacherous Reasonings for vanquished, having still so fair, and as he imagines, so strong a Refuge for his delays in reserve, as the Example of the Penitent Thief, pardoned at his last Hours upon the Cross, and translated from thence into Paradise, to be with Christ in Bliss that very Day, and this without all the painful Qualifications of such a long and bitter Repentance, as I have been saying, is the very best a Man can hope for, who hath con-

tinued all his Days in a State of Sin and Impenitence. This is an Inſtance, much in the obſervation and eſteem of Men, who indulge wicked Habits. And we are ſure to hear it urged with great Confidence, in bar to the neceſſity of a ſpeedy Reformation, when we preſs ſuch to it. And without all diſpute, This is a Caſe, which may and ought to be matter of great Comfort to every Man, who finds himſelf reduced to his laſt Stake. Eſpecially when, as is uſual in ſuch Circumſtances, the Devil tempts them to deſpair of God's Mercy, and to give themſelves up for loſt, which it is not at any time fit for them to do. For the ſame God, who reſcued that great Malefactour from eternal Deſtruction, at his laſt Hour, can likewiſe, nay and will, ſave all them, who truly and ſincerely turn to him, though it be at their laſt Hour. But the great Misfortune is, that Men do not ſo much attend to the real Comforts, which this Caſe affords, as ſtudy for, and flatter themſelves with falſe Ones, and ſo, by underſtanding and uſing this Paſſage amiſs, make that which ſhould encourage their Repentance, ſerve a quite contrary Purpoſe, and harden them in Impenitence.

For there are many things to be conſidered in order to ſet this Paſſage in its true Light, and informing us throughly, what Supports belong to us from it. As for Inſtance, Though many catch at this Example very greedily, and challenge a right in the Conſequences deduced from it, yet after all, This is but one particular Act of Chriſt, upon a particular Occaſion; and we have no expreſs Warrant given us from Scripture, or Reaſon, for drawing it into a general Rule. How frequent a thing is it with Temporal Princes, now and then to extend Mercy

to

to a condemned Malefactor, and to pardon him at the very time and Place of Execution? And yet no Body argues ſo wildly from hence, as to ſuppoſe, that this gives every ſentenced Criminal a Right to depend upon the ſame Favour. Becauſe this is an extraordinary Act of free Grace, beſide the common Meaſures of Juſtice and Government, and neither ſhewed, nor promiſed to all the Subjects in general. Moreover; This Pardon of the penitent Thief was a ſpecial Miracle of Mercy, reſerved for the Manifeſtation of Chriſt's Glory, and Power to forgive Sins, to be thus exhibited, at a Seaſon of his loweſt Humiliation and Contempt.

Again. This Inſtance of Favour followed upon a ſingular and unparallel'd Confeſſion of Chriſt, made by that Thief, at a critical Juncture, when all the World beſides had forſaken our Lord, when the very Apoſtles themſelves either doubted, or at leaſt had for the preſent loſt all Perſwaſion and Belief, of his Divine Nature and Perfections.

Once more. This Confeſſion was at ſuch a time, when that Thief had no Opportunity of being Baptized, no Space left for common Repentance, and conſequently this unuſual Diſpenſation of Grace was neceſſary then, as the only means remaining to ſave a Man, who had done all, that in his Circumſtances was poſſible to be done. And it is generally allowed, that of any Man at his firſt Converſion, no more is required, than a ſtedfaſt Faith, a hearty Sorrow for Sins paſt, and a ſincere Reſolution of living better for the future, (if the party be at Years of Diſcretion, and have committed actual Sins, and have longer to live) and from thence to proceed to Baptiſm, and the ordinary

Methods of Salvation. So that the ſame Diſpoſition which qualifies others for the Goſpel-Covenant, and the regular means of Grace, might qualify this Perſon, who had no room left for thoſe means, for Heaven and Happineſs. But, that I may not ſeem to advance theſe Notions without ſufficient Authority, I ſhall deſire my Reader to obſerve, how the moſt eminent and pious Saints have delivered their Opinions concerning this Matter.

Serm. 120. de Temp. St. *Auguſtine* particularly diſcourſes at large to this purpoſe. " It is, ſays he, a moſt incura-
" ble Evil, when a Man abandons himſelf to
" Vice, ſo intirely as to forget, that God will
" call him to an Account for his Actions. And
" the reaſon why I look upon this to be a deſ-
" perate Caſe, is, that a more grievous Puniſh-
" ment of Sin cannot poſſibly fall upon us, than
" to be forſaken of all fear and remembrance
" of the dreadful Judgment to come. But, my
" beloved Brethren, to prevent all Danger of
" Security and Remiſſneſs in this important
" Affair, which may ariſe from the uncommon
" Happineſs of the Thief converted upon the
" Croſs; and, that none of you may wickedly
" reaſon thus in his own Heart, why ſhould my
" guilty Conſcience give me Trouble, or the
" Wickedneſs of my profligate Life make me
" afraid, when I ſee that this Man's Sins were all
" forgiven in a moment? We muſt conſider,
" not only, how ſhort the time of his Belief,
" and how ſudden his Converſion was, but
" withall, how zealous his Devotion was, and
" how perfect his Faith, which exerted it ſelf
" ſo vigorouſly at a time when that, even of
" the Juſt, did ſtagger and deſpond. Again,
" let them who depend upon this Thief's Ex-
" ample,

" ample, ſhew, that they imitate his Example
" indeed; let them produce the ſame Evidences
" of their Belief, and then I may allow them to
" promiſe themſelves the ſame Grace and Hap-
" pineſs. Alas! my Friend, the Devil puts this
" pretence of Security into thy Head, that he
" may thereby work thy Deſtruction. And it
" is much to be feared, that innumerable Mul-
" titudes of unwary Souls have periſhed upon
" a falſe Confidence in this deceitful Hope.
" That Man deludes himſelf moſt miſerably,
" and makes a jeſt of Sin and eternal Damnati-
" on, upon a vain Imagination, who thinks
" that the Mercy of God will come into his Re-
" lief at the laſt Moments of his Life. Nothing
" is more provoking, more abominable in the
" ſight of God, than for a Man to put no re-
" ſtraint upon the Sins and Follies of his Youth,
" upon a pretended purpoſe of Repenting, and
" making amends for all in Sickneſs, or Old
" Age. This happy Penitent, (and therefore
" happy, becauſe he did not induſtriouſly lay
" Snares and Obſtructions in his own way, but
" readily laid hold on Chriſt, who is himſelf
" *the Way*,) took Life by violence, as it were,
" and made infinite advantage of his own
" Death. He did not wilfully deferr the time
" of Salvation, he did not by a treacherous De-
" ceit, put the State of his Soul to all Eternity,
" upon that ſingle Iſſue of his laſt Hour; he
" did not obſtinately reſerve his Converſion to
" his dying Breath; he had not any knowledge
" of Chriſt, or his Truth, before that time.
" For had he had any, we may inferr from his
" Behaviour, that he who was firſt in the King-
" dom of Heaven, would not have been the laſt
" among the Apoſtles.

Thus we ſee, how far this Holy Father was from thinking, that this ſingle Inſtance was to be depended upon, as an univerſal Standard, for the Remiſſion of grievous Offenders; And upon what Grounds it was, that he thought otherwiſe. Not from any want of readineſs in Chriſt to receive all Penitents according to his Promiſe: For this he does to every one, who truly turns to him, as gladly as he did it to this Thief. But in regard that every one is not in the ſame Circumſtances, nor hath the ſame Meaſure of Grace afforded him, nor the ſame Opportunities for repenting as he ought, at his laſt Hour. The general Method of proceeding is, that Men are dealt with according to their Works, and ſuch ſort of Perſons as they chooſe to live, ſuch God ſuffers them to dye. *God ſpoke once*, ſays the Pſalmiſt, *and twice I have heard this, that Power belongeth unto God; alſo unto thee, O Lord, is Mercy, for thou rendreſt to every Man according to his Work.* And the Son of *Sirach*, *The way of Sinners is made plain with ſtones, but at the end thereof is the pit of Hell.* And St. *Paul* yet more plainly and fully; *Be not deceived, God is not mocked; for whatſoever a Man ſoweth, that ſhall he alſo reap: For he that ſoweth to his fleſh, ſhall of the fleſh reap Corruption; but he that ſoweth to the Spirit, ſhall of the Spirit reap life everlaſting.* Here then is the univerſal Rule, and this is what we have to truſt to; that Men are to expect Good for Good, and Evil for Evil; and to perſwade our ſelves otherwiſe, and ſo depend upon irregular and extraordinary Methods in our favour, is no better than thinking to mock God, and a moſt wretched cheating of our own ſelves.

Pſal 62. 11,12.

Eccluſ. 21, 10.

Gal. 6. 7, 8.

But

But however, God hath not bound himſelf up ſo ſtrictly by this general Rule neither, that he ſhould not ſtill be at Liberty, as oft he ſees fit, to give the Privilege of Repentance, and Pardon, to ſome particular Perſons, even at the laſt gaſp. God is not barred, I ſay, by his own Law; ſo as that he may not do this. But wretched is the Condition of that Soul, which hath no other Anchor of Hope, nothing left to determine her Eternal Happineſs or Miſery, but this very doubtful and tickliſh Point, the bare Preſumption, that what he may do in ſome Caſes, he will certainly do in this Caſe. I call it a doubful and tickliſh Point, becauſe indeed all ſober and pious Chriſtians, have conſtantly ſpoken and thought very dubiouſly, concerning it. And, though they do not abſolutely declare againſt a late and death-bed Repentance, but leave it to the ſecret Judgment of God; as a Matter not ſafe, or poſſible, for Man to paſs a poſitive Sentence upon; yet they manifeſtly incline to the Negative ſide of the Queſtion, and they bring ſuch Arguments for their Opinion, as muſt convince any reaſonable Man, that it is by no means fit to betake our ſelves to this laſt Remedy, when we have ſo many better, and more in our Hands.

This is, without Diſpute, (as a learned *Caſuiſt* begins his Diſquiſition upon it) a Matter that miniſters more ground of Fear to the Party concerned, than it does of doubt to the Divine, who undertakes to handle the Point. *Res eſt quæ plus timoris, quàm' dubitationis affert.* Two Concluſions the ſame Author lays down there which cannot reaſonably be conteſted. The *Firſt* is, that according to the Promiſe made by God in *Ezekiel*, *At what time ſoever a Man turns truly to*

Sect. 22. l. 4. Sent. q. 19. art. 6.

Ezek. 18. 27.

to God, from the wickedneſs that he hath committed, he ſhall be graciouſly accepted, and pardoned. And not only ſo, but he admits farther, that ſo long as God ſpares a Man his Life, and the uſe of his Senſes, it is not impoſſible, but that his Will may be ſo aſſiſted and powerfully wrought upon by God's Grace, that he may truly repent. But then he qualifies this Concluſion with a Second, which takes away all Ground of carnal Security: Which is, that *the late Repentance of a Man, who hath wilfully driven it off to the very end of his Life, is by no means fit to be depended upon; nor can it yield any great aſſurance of Pardon, eſpecially to People, whoſe lives, for the general Courſe of them, have been notoriouſly bad, except there be a very great and extraordinary Sorrow, and ſome very evident marks of the Sincerity of ſuch a Repentance.*

The Reaſons of this ſeemingly hard Sentence are obvious. For ſuch Men's Sins are loaded with very grievous Circumſtances; They have by Cuſtom and Obſtinacy, heaped up to themſelves an incredible quantity of Wrath and Vengeance; They have lived in defiance of God, and his Laws deſpiſed his Threatnings and Promiſes, ſet at nought his Anger, abuſed his Patience, that waited long, and defeated his Goodneſs, that uſed great variety of excellent Arts for their Amendment; They have by theſe means rendred themſelves altogether unworthy of, and unqualified for that Grace, which is indiſpenſably neceſſary to their Converſion. And therefore, all theſe things conſidered, there is a great deal of Reaſon to queſtion, whether the appearances of Repentance at ſuch a time, be real, or but a ſhew and empty Appearance only: Whether the Sorrow they expreſs be truly

truly ſorrow for Sin, for having offended God, and behaved themſelves, as they ought not; or, whether it be the Sorrow of a hardned Malefactor; dragged to Execution, who hath no manner of Concern for the breach of the Laws, or the Injuſtice of his Fact, but only for the Puniſhment, which he is juſt going to ſuffer for it.

To the ſame effect another celebrated Divine ſays, "It is not eaſy to conceive,. how that Repentance which comes ſo late as a Death-bed, ſhould be true Repentance. For, when our Body, through every part is upon the Rack with Pain, it is not eaſy for a Man to command his Thoughts off from his Anguiſh to any other Object. So that this kind of Converſion ſeems rather to be the effect of Force, than of free Choice. And, though a Man in that Condition may think himſelf ſincerely deſirous to forſake his Sins, yet is it an eaſy matter, even for the Party concerned, to be deceived in this Matter; and to imagine that very Thing to be want of Will, which is in truth no more than want of Power. He will be Wicked no longer, only becauſe he cannot. But, on the other ſide, Things within our Power are a propor Teſt to prove the bent of our Hearts; For if we do not that, which we might do, this is a plain Demonſtration that we have not the Will to do it. Thus that Author makes it a very queſtionable Thing, whether a Death-bed Repentance be voluntary or conſtrained, which is but in other Words to doubt, whether it be barely poſſible, for ſuch to be accepted, and available for Pardon.

Hug de S. Vict. de Sacr. L. 2. p. 14 c. 5.

Obſerve St. *Auguſtin's* Advice to the ſame purpoſe. "When your laſt Sickneſs ſhall ſeize upon

Aug. Ser. 48 ad Frat. in Eremo.

" upon your Vitals, O how hard will you find
" it to repent, and be ſorry for the Evils you
" have done, and ſhould not, and the Good
" you might and ought to have done, but did
" not! And what do you think will make it ſo
" much harder then, than at any other time?
" This, no doubt, that the main ſtreſs of your
" Mind will be determined to that part, whi-
" ther the main of your Grief draws it. And be
" well aſſured a world of Obſtructions will in-
" terpoſe, and take you off from the Work of
" Repentance, in that Seaſon of Pain and Lan-
" guiſhing. Your Body will be full of Torture;
" Weakneſs and Decay will grow upon you
" every Minute; Death will approach with his
" gaſtly Form, and fill your Soul with Terror:
" The Family will be crowding about to do
" their laſt Offices. And, What a lamentable
" Look will Fathers caſt at thoſe Children, who
" have been always particularly dear, and per-
" haps for the inordinate Love of whom, they
" have abandoned themſelves to the World all
" their Days, and are now moving towards
" Hell upon their account? When the Wife ſits
" weeping by the Bed-ſide, and Friends ſtand
" round comforting you, and theſe and the
" Man's own Inclinations flattering with Hopes
" of Recovery, and Phiſitians incouraging thoſe
" Hopes, how eaſy will it be for the Devil to
" diſſwade him from Repentance! Doſt thou
" attend, Chriſtian, to what I tell thee? De-
" pend upon it, if thou doſt not, thy own ſad
" Experience ſhall ſhortly convince thee, that
" it is even ſo. Let me then prevail with thee,
" to ſet about Repentance immediately, and
" make thy Peace with God or ever thou be
" Sick. Set thy Houſe in order, make thy Will,

" dif-

" diſpatch all thy Affairs of Conſequence, " while thou haſt Health and Leiſure, while " thou canſt act without Confuſion, while thy " Senſes are perfect, and thou art thy own " Man. And happy ſure are they who take this Good Advice.

Another, preſſing the ſame Counſel, after a long and pathetical Exhortation, concludes in Terms that ought to ſtrike Terrour, into all that delay this neceſſary Work. " He that " leads a wicked Life, and will not think of " Repentance till he is in danger of Death; As " his Caſe with regard to Damnation is dan- " gerous to the laſt Degree, ſo is his Pardon " doubtful. The only way to be ſure of " Pardon, when a Man dies, is to Repent while " he is in full Health. Some are too haſty in " promiſing Security upon any the leaſt Signs " of Repentance; but theſe are ſuch, as the " Lord complains of by his Prophet *Jeremy*, " *They have healed the Hurt of the Daughter of my* " *People ſlightly, ſaying Peace, Peace, when there* " *is no Peace.* Thus he inſinuates, that a Death- " Bed Repentance cannot be ſure of Pardon; becauſe we cannot be ſure, whether it be true and ſufficient Repentance, or not. Iſidor. de Sum. Bono. cap. 13.

To which we may add two other Reaſons of conſiderable weight. *Firſt*, that, though we could be certain of God's Acceptance at our laſt Hour, yet would it be a great indignity to truſt to that, ſince God created us, not to Sin and then ask forgiveneſs, but to *ſerve him in Righteouſneſs and Holineſs all the Days of our Life:* and conſequently, they that lead a Wicked Life perform no part of that Buſineſs, which God made, and ſent them into the World, for. *Secondly*, Since we cannot ſerve God in Holineſs, nor

nor Love, and Honour him, as we ought otherwiſe, than by Repentance and Good Works, This Converſion lays ſo ſtrict an Obligation upon our Conſciences, that, every Hour we defer it, adds to the Degrees of our Guilt, and heaps freſh Wrath upon us. It is not neceſſary upon this occaſion, to determine the preciſe Time, when this Obligation takes Place; but it is moſt evident, it muſt needs oblige us ſooner than the Approach of Death. Since he who defers it thus long, muſt of neceſſity aggravate and multiply his own Offences; treaſure up an infinite deal of Vengeance againſt himſelf, loſe all the Occaſions of exerciſing Holy Graces and Good Works, defeat the intent of his Creation, enjoy no Benefit of being a Chriſtian, and make himſelf daily more and more a Veſſel of Wrath, and fitted for Deſtruction.

In a juſt deteſtation of ſuch Obſtinacy and unworthy proceeding with Almighty God, St. *Cyprian* pronounces that ſevere Sentence. "That "*ſuch as* do not give proof of their Repentance, "by teſtifying their Grief for having offended "from the very bottom of their Hearts, and "openly bewailing the Scandal their Miſdemenours have given, ſhould not be received into "Communion, nor reconciled to the Church, "if theſe marks of their Sorrow were not "antecedent to their Sickneſs and Danger "of Death; Becauſe this is not an Act of "free remorſe, but a matter of Terror and "Conſtraint; And it is by no means fit, that "he ſhould receive Comfort when he comes to "die, who never thought of Death, till he was "juſt upon the Brink of it. And, though the rigour of this Judgment hath been ſomewhat moderated in the Practice of the Church, yet it ſhews

Cypr. Epiſt. 55. Edit. Oxon.

ſhews us what a very mean Opinion Holy Men heretofore had of a Death-bed Repentance; and how doubtful they were of its ſucceſs. St. *Auguſtin* particularly ſays, that a *Sick Man's Repentance is like himſelf, feeble and Sick; and that of a dying Man, he fears is but dead and ineffectual.* Serm. 57. de Temp. And again, *That Man is very far from a true Believer, who ſtays till Old Age, before he will be prevailed upon to repent and become a new Man.* And how ought this to move us, how to diſarm us of all our falſe Confidences, if Faith, the very firſt and fundamental Principle of a Chriſtian, be not allowed to them that defer their Converſion to the latter part of their Days?

But you will ask perhaps, What is to be done then, when a Man finds himſelf reduced to his laſt Shifts, and not yet reconciled to God? Muſt he lie down, and deſpair, and is there nothing left, no refuge for this Wretch to flee to? To this I anſwer, That he muſt do what he can, he Ch. 1. muſt not deſpair even then, but remember what I have already delivered in the beginning of this Second Book; Let him reflect, that the Mercies of God are infinite; let him ſue and moſt vehemently importune him for Pardon; let him call in the Aſſiſtance of his ſpiritual Guides; and let his Diligence, and Zeal be the greater, in Proportion as his Neglect and Impenitence have been longer; for if even then his Repentance be hearty and ſincere, there is no doubt, but God will accept it. For you may plainly ſee, that all the difficulty the Authors already cited make, relates to the ſincerity of a late Repentance, and the impoſſibility of being fully ſatisfied in ſuch Circumſtances, that it is true Repentance. Which point becauſe I know no body that hath ſtated more nicely than St. *Auguſtin*,

I will here ſet down his Reſolution of it at large.

Hom. 41 et 50.

"Every true Penitent (ſays he) that repents and then dies, looſed from the Bonds of that Captivity which ſeparated him from Chriſt, reſts in Peace. But if a Man, in the extremity of Sickneſs profeſſes to repent, and depart in the Peace of the Church; I muſt own to you, we cannot deny him that reconciliation he deſires, and yet we do not preſume neither, that ſuch a one dies in a ſafe Condition. We do not preſume it; I tell you plainly. A true Believer, that hath led a Good Life, dies in ſafety; A Man that dies immediately after his Baptiſm, dies in ſafety. He that repents, and is reconciled in time of Health, and manifeſts his integrity by a courſe of holy Converſation afterwards, is ſafe when he dies. But he, that puts off his Repentance and Reconciliation to the laſt, though he have all the formalities of a Reconciliation, I am not ſure, that he dies in a ſafe Condition. Where I am ſure I, ſpeak plainly, and give ſecurity; but where I am not, though I give Men Reconciliation to the Church, I give them no ſecurity of Peace, with God. But here perhaps it may be ſaid, *If you that are a Prieſt cannot tell, what State a Man, who repents at his Death only, is in after Death, nor can aſſure ſuch of Salvation, teach us, I beſeech you, how we muſt live after Repentance, to be ſure of dying in a ſafe Condition.* I tell you how. Abſtain from Drunkenneſs, from fleſhly Luſts, from Robbery and Injuſtice, from Lying and Evil-ſpeaking, from inordinate Mirth, and from all thoſe Words, which Men muſt give an account for in the Day of

"Judg-

" Judgment. Some of theſe I fear are made no
" great Conſcience of, and yet they are all
" eſteemed great in the ſight of God, and de-
" ſtructive to the Perſons who commit them.
" Theſe Things the Man muſt not only avoid,
" from the time of his laſt Reconciliation, but
" before, in his full Health: For if he drive it
" off to the laſt, he cannot tell, whether God will
" allow him ſpace for Repentance and Reconci-
" liation, or not. Therefore a Man ſhould live
" well before, and better after, his Repentance
" and Reconciliation. --- Obſerve what I ſay,
" for perhaps I ſhall do well to explain my ſelf
" yet more particularly for fear of being miſun-
" der ſtood. What then? Do I prononounce that
" Man damned who repents at his death only?
" No, I do not. Do I then declare him ſaved?
" No, not that neither. What then? I confeſs
" I know nothing, preſume nothing, promiſe
" nothing, in ſo doubtful and hazardous a Caſe.
" He that would put this Matter paſt a Doubt,
" muſt repent in time of Youth and Health. If
" this be done, and the Change made, and thou
" feel the Day of Death approaching, trim
" thy Lamp, make ready for thy Paſſage, re-
" ceive the bleſſed Sacrament, and do the Of-
" fices of a pious Chriſtian, and thus thou art
" certainly ſafe. And why ſafe for this? Why
" for that very Reaſon, becauſe thou didſt Re-
" pent at a time, when thou mightſt have ſin-
" ned on longer. But if thou Repent then on-
" ly, when thou canſt ſin no longer, thou doſt
" not forſake Sin, but Sin forſakes thee. But
" you will ask, how I know whether God will
" forgive a Man at the laſt Hour or no? You
" put the Queſtion well; I do not know. For
" if I knew that Abſolution, and the Sacra-
" ment

" ment would do a Man no manner of Good " at his laſt Hour, I would not give it him. " And on the other hand, if I thought theſe " alone ſufficient to ſecure his Salvation, I " would not warn, and terrify you in the ſolemn " manner that I do. Either God Pardons ſuch " a Man or he does not; that one of theſe Two " ſhall be I know, but whether of the Two " ſhall be I do not know. And therefore a " Wiſe Man in this Caſe would Repent while " he may be ſure of ſafety, lay hold on the " Certainty, and have nothing to do with the " uncertainty.

And now, let but any Man, that calls himſelf a Man, or a Chriſtian, conſider this one Point. If the Danger and the Dubiouſneſs of a late Repentance be ſo great, upon ſuppoſition, that a Man do then Repent; What, can we think, muſt needs become of all thoſe Wretches, who have not either Time, or not Ability, or not Inclination, or not Means, or not Grace to Repent at all, when that diſmal Hour overtakes them? What a horrible Thing is it to be cut off ſuddenly, to be ſtruck Dumb with a Palſy, or ſenſeleſs in Apoplex, or frantick in a raging Fever? to be abandoned by God, and continue raving, and blaſpheming, and plainly wedded to Vice, to the very laſt Gaſp? In compariſon of theſe a Death-bed Penitent's Caſe is happy: And yet, you ſee, All we can ſay for that is, that we may Hope, but cannot Promiſe; But, for the reſt; We are ſo far from being able to promiſe, that the Goſpel affords not the leaſt Foundation, even for Hope, or charitable Belief.

I leave this whole Diſcourſe upon my Reader, with thoſe Words of *Solomon*, which, it were much to be wiſhed, were graven in deep in-

indelible Characters, in the Memory and Heart of every Sinner. For ſure it muſt awaken him out of his profound Sleep to hear Almighty God threatning him after this manner, and ſtartle him to think, how he ſhall bear the Accompliſhment of this Prophetick Curſe upon him in his greateſt Extremity; *Becauſe I have called, and ye refuſed, I have ſtretched out my Hand, and no Man regarded; I alſo will laugh at your Calamity, I will mock when your Fear cometh. Then ſhall they call upon me, but I will not anſwer, they ſhall ſeek me early, but they ſhall not find me.* O may we never be found among the Number of thoſe, whom God will one Day thus upbraid, and even Triumph and take Delight in their Ruine; but make haſt to *ſeek him while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near.* For *whoſo hearkneth unto him, ſhall dwell ſafely, and ſhall be quiet from fear of Evil.* Prov. 1. 24, 26, 28. V. 33.

SECT. III.

Some Examples of Perſons, who periſhed in their Impenitence; and Pious Exhortations to ſpeedy Repentance.

IT is hard to ſay, what will prevail upon thoſe hardned Wretches, who are not moved with the Arguments already urged. And yet it is not fit, any thing ſhould be left unattempted, for the removing ſo general and ſo fatal an Obſtruction, as this of delaying Repentence is, to Mens everlaſting Salvation. I ſhall therefore, before I diſmiſs this Subject, try to make ſome profitable Impreſſion upon the Souls ſeduced by it, by repreſenting the diſmal Judgments of God upon ſome Impenitent Wretches, and

the affectionate Exhortations of Holy Men to a timely and effectual Repentance.

As to what reſpects the former of theſe Particulars, I ſhall confine my ſelf to ſuch Examples, as the Holy Ghoſt hath, for our warning, left upon Record in Scripture; and theſe too ſuch, as had, all of them, very loud and awakening calls from God. *Herod* the Firſt had ſuch a Call by the Wiſemen, who came out of the Eaſt to
Mat. 2. *Jeruſalem*, in ſearch for the Meſſiah, the new-born King of the Jews; but he was ſo far from hearkning to it, as, by a moſt barbarous Murder, of abundance of innocent Babes, to endeavour the Deſtruction of that wonderful Child, whom he ought indeed to have paid that Worſhip and Homage to, which he treacherouſly pretended to deſign. And for this obſtinate cruelty God puniſhed him with a very ſad and unuſual kind of Death. *Herod the Tetrarch* had ſufficient warning given him by *John* Baptiſt, whoſe
Mark. 6. Preaching was ſo powerful, that it found a Paſſage to his Heart; he heard him gladly, he did many Things in obedience to his Doctrine; but when the ſinful Cohabitation with his Brother's Wife, came to be urged home upon his Conſcience, this coſt the Preacher his Head. And he
Luk. 23. again who was deſirous to ſee Chriſt, and ſome Miracle done by him, when this ended in reviling and ſetting him at nought, was caſt off by Almighty God, and that opportunity of converſion turned to his heavier Condemnation.
Mat. 27. What an opportunity of Conviction, and Repentance, did God put into *Pilate's* Hands, had he but been ſo happy to make a Good uſe of it? He underſtood our Saviour's Innocence, and, by his own Examinations and Conferences with him, was fully ſatisfied in his own Breaſt, that

he

he was a very extraordinary Perſon: He had warning from his Wife, not to have any Thing to do with the Blood of that juſt Perſon, and declared to the People, more than once, that he ought not to condemn him: and yet, in deſpight of all theſe Checks, he ſtifled all the Impreſſions made upon his own Breaſt, gave up Him to the Barbarity of his Enemies, to whom he ought to have given up his own corrupt Heart; and was afterwards made an exemplary Sufferer, for that Popularity and Ambition, which had ſwayed him in crucifying our Bleſſed Lord, againſt the clear Teſtimony of his own Conſcience, and his own Mouth. *Felix*, one of his Succeſſors in the Government of *Judea*, ſent often for St. *Paul*, when he was his Priſoner, and conferred ſecretly with him, concerning the Faith of Chriſt: The Apoſtle knew very well, what ſort of Application this Man's Diſeaſe required, and therefore took an Opportunity to diſcourſe one Day very particularly, upon *Righteouſneſs, and Temperance, and Judgment to come*; But he, like the Perſons we are now dealing with, was not for making preſent riddance, but ſent off the Preacher, and the Admonitions and Reproaches of his own Mind, till ſome more convenient Seaſon; which Seaſon never came, and ſo the Matter was of no effect. How happy had *Pharaoh* been, if he had proſecuted thoſe Relentings, which his Heart often ſmote him with for his Wickedneſs? But, after all his Humiliations to *Moſes*, in the bitterneſs of his Diſtreſs, after ſo many Warnings and Confeſſions, and Proteſtations, *The Lord is Righteous, and I and my People are wicked*; no ſooner was the Plague removed, but he was for gaining more time, till at laſt the Vengeance of God glorified it ſelf upon

Act. 24.

upon this hardned Dilatory Sinner; Who, the longer he lived, grew ſo much the worſe, that he might be ripe at laſt for Judgment without Mercy, who had ſo often, and ſo obſtinately ſtood out Proof againſt all the Methods of Mercy, (whether by way of Puniſhment or of Deliverance) which were made uſe of to ſoften and to reclaim him. Thus you find it was, in thoſe Two moſt remarkable Judgments ſo often mentioned by our Bleſſed Saviour, the Deſtruction of the old World by a Flood; and that of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah* by Fire from Heaven. Neither wanted Calls and Warnings, nor ſpace for Amendment; To the former, God gave a Hundred and Twenty Years notice; to the other, the Reproofs and Inſtructions of righteous *Lot*. But ſtill *they Eat, they Drank, they Married, and were given in Marriage*, till the Flood in one Caſe, and the Fire in the other, ſwept them away to a ſad Eternity. And thus again it was, in that other diſmal overthrow, ſo often foretold by our Lord upon *Jeruſalem*, and the Jewiſh Nation; never was ſuch a Calamity upon any Nation under Heaven. And why was this? But, as I hinted before, becauſe *God had ſtretcht forth his Hands all Day to a Diſobedient and gainſaying People; he would have gathered them, and they would not, therefore their Houſe is left unto them deſolate.*

By all theſe, and by many more, inſtances, we may ſee, that God deals with all Mankind,
Rev. 3. as himſelf declares in the Revelation, *Behold I ſtand at the Door and knock*; but if we will not open, what follows then? No other, than that
Rev. 2. Curſe upon the Idolatrous Church, *I gave her ſpace to Repent, and ſhe would not Repent; Therefore ſhall ſhe be caſt into great Tribulation.* He promiſes

miſes to knock and call; but he does not limit himſelf to any time, nor tell us how often he will call, or how long he will continue knocking. Nay, even the Puniſhments inflicted for our obſtinacy in this World, are ſo many freſh Knocks, and louder Calls; For it is a Favour, and a Privilege, to ſuffer here, rather than to be turned over to the Divine Juſtice hereafter. And therefore, when we pity thoſe that ſmart under the Rod of God, for their Offences in Sickneſs, or Poverty, or any other Temporal Afflictions; let us remember, how much worſe it is with the Proſperous and Gay Sinner; With them, who are given over to a Reprobate Senſe; With them, who are cut off in the midſt of their Wickedneſs, who might all have ſaved themſelves, had they not ſhifted off their Converſion, but taken up Good Reſolutions preſently, and effactually, when they felt the Good Motions of the Holy Spirit awakening nd importuning them to do ſo.

I now proceed to the *Second* Thing propoſed, to lay before my Reader ſome of thoſe pious Exhortations to a timely Repentance, which Holy Men in all Ages, have left behind them to this purpoſe. The firſt of theſe ſhall be taken from S. *Baſil*, who obſerves, "That this is the great "Artifice of our Adverſary the Devil, to per- "ſwade us to devote to Day to his Service, and "to Morrow to God's. And, when that Mor- "row comes, and is the preſent Day, he repeats "the ſame Perſwaſion, upon the ſame Ground, "becauſe it is the preſent: Till at laſt Death "overtakes us inſtead of that fantaſtical *To Mor- "row*, which we had deſigned for the Seaſon of "our Repentance. And, in another place, preſ- "ſing a ſpeedy return to God, "Let the laſt "Day, (ſays he) be ever before thy Eyes; "When

De Baptiſm.

Ad Fil. Spirit.

"When thou riſeſt in the Morning, be not ſecure "of living till Night; and when thou lyeſt "down in thy Bed, depend not upon ſeeing an- "other Morning. For who knows what a Day "may bring forth?

St. *Auſtin*, whoſe own Experience had convinced him of the fallacy of theſe delays, ſpeaks of the Matter very feelingly; He confeſſes that there was no end of his anſwering *By and by*, and therefore he broke off all his Pretences, of *I come to Morrow*, and manfully reſolved upon coming that very Inſtant, the Comfort of which Reſolution he deſcribes in very tender Expreſſions. "How ſweet, O Lord, did I find it to "abandon thoſe Pleaſures, which I once thought "it impoſſible to be eaſy without? Thou didſt "caſt them out, O true and perfect Sweetneſs, "and didſt enter in their ſtead, who art ſweeter "than all Pleaſures, even Pleaſure in the Ab- "ſtract, and Sweetneſs it ſelf. This of his own Caſe, and to others he addreſſes himſelf thus. "What was ever ſo Patient and Long-Suffering, "what ſo full of Goodneſs, as the Method of Al- "mighty God's Proceedings with Sinners! Men "offend God, and yet they are ſuffered to live; "They multiply their Offences, againſt him, "and yet he prolongs their Days; They Blaſ- "pheme his Majeſty, and deny his Providence, "and yet he cauſes his Sun to ſhine, and his Rain "to fall, upon the Evil as as well as the Good. "He calls them every way to amendment "by lengthening out the ſpace of Repen- "tance, by Good Sermons, Good Books, Good "Advice, by ſecret Checks and Motions, by "the Rod of Correction, by Comforts, and En- "couragements. Oh how ſweet, how wonder- "ful is the Patience and Mercy of this Good "God! But take heed O Man, that thou abuſe "not

Conf. l. 8. c. 5.

Conf. l. 9. c. 1.

In Pſal. 102.

" not this Goodneſs. He deſigns by this to bring " thee to a Change of Life; And ſtill thou cryeſt, " *It is no matter to Day, to Morrow I will conſider* " *of it*; and when to Morrow comes, *Well*, *'tis* " *time enough yet, another Day will do as well*; and " thus thou trifleſt away the Day of Grace, till " the Wrath of God ruſh upon thee unawares, " and thou periſh by his Juſtice, whoſe Kind- " neſs thou haſt deſpiſed. The ſame Author applies the parable of the Labourers hired into the Vineyard, to the different Seaſons and Methods of calling Men into God's Service, ſome are taken in in their Infancy, ſome in their Youth, ſome again, in their more confirmed Years, ſome in Old Age, and others juſt at the end of their Lives. " Hearken then, ſays " he, my Brethren I beſeech you, and let none " of you loiter, or delay his coming into the " Vineyard, upon a pretence, that, let him come " when he will, the Penny ſhall be Good to him. " For, though it be true, that every Labourer " ſhall have his Hire, yet will not this bear any " Man out in declining to labour, did any of thoſe " who were called at the Firſt and Third Hours, " bid the Husband-Man wait for them till the " Sixth, or Ninth, or Eleventh? Come there- " fore as ſoon as thou art called, becauſe thou " knoweſt the Reward is promiſed to all, but " all are not promiſed to be taken in, when " they pleaſe. If thou art called at the Sixth " Hour, make haſt, for thou canſt not tell, whe- " ther thou ſhalt live to the Seventh. For why " ſhouldſt thou put off the Houſholder that calls " thee, ſince thou art ſure of the Reward upon " thy complyance, but not ſure that he will al- " low thee another Hour to come in at? Take " heed then leſt, by delay, thou deprive thy

De veh. Dom. ap. Joan. Ser. 59.

"ſelf of that Recompence, which his Promiſe "hath given thee a Title to, provided thou "come when thou art called. And a little after he anſwers that excuſe which the negligent and idle are uſed to frame to themſelves from that Paſſage in *Ezekiel*, that *At what time ſoever a Man ſhall turn from his Wickedneſs he ſhall ſave his Soul alive.* "If God will be merciful at any "time, ſays the Worldling, why may not I as "well be converted to Morrow as to Day? No, "ſays St. *Auguſtin*, Thou ſayſt thou wilt put an "end to thy Wickedneſs to Morrow, but how "art thou aſſured, that God will not put an end "to thy Life before to Morrow? Thou haſt rea-"ſon in taking Comfort, that God hath promi-"ſed thee Forgiveneſs, whenever thou ſhalt Re-"pent; but hath God any where promiſed, that "he will give thee longer time to Repent in? "The Wiſe-man adviſes to *make no tarrying to turn unto the Lord, and not to put off from Day to Day, becauſe Wrath as well as Mercy are from him, and he will deſtroy Sinners in their Security.* Eccluſ. 5. 5, 6. "Let not thy delay then ſhut that Door againſt "thee, which God hath opened. Behold the "Giver of Pardon opens to thee, and wilt thou "not come in? Thou ſhouldſt have thought it "a mighty Mercy, if he had opened, when thou "hadſt knock'd, but he hath opened without "thy knocking, and wilt thou ſtill remain with-"out? The Scripture ſays, *Do not ſay to thy Neighbour go, and come again, and to Morrow I will give thee, when thou haſt it by thee.* Prov. 3. 28. We muſt "not delay Mercy to others, and ſhall we be "guilty of the cruelleſt delay to our ſelves? We "muſt not defer our Alms, and ſhall we defer "the Pardon of our Sins? Be merciful to thy "own Soul, Man, and do not put off when thou

"haſt

" haſt it by thee. Nay here thou needeſt not, " thou doſt not give thy own, it is only requir- " ed, that thou do not refuſe what is offered; " the beſt and greateſt Charity; remiſſion of all " thy Offences, which by ſpeedy Repentance, " thou mayſt give to thy needy Soul, but by un- " kind delays thou wilt certainly loſe and eva- " cuate. And ſure that Man is very barbarous to himſelf, upon whom this Argument makes no Impreſſion.

I ſhall enlarge a little more upon the Danger of this delay, by conſidering with St. *Gregory*, how Sins unrepented draw Men into Perdition. For, as *Seneca* hath very judiciouſly obſerved, there is this remarkable Difference, between the Sickneſſes of the Soul, and thoſe of the Body: That the Bodily, the greater they are, the more painful and ſenſible they are; But thoſe of the Mind, the greater they are, the leſs they are felt, and complained of: Becauſe it is the Nature of theſe Diſeaſes to ſtupify the Man, and abate the ſenſe of his Danger: So that habitual Sinners by degrees come to be ſo hardned, as in time to commit the blackeſt and moſt notorious Crimes, without any ſcruple or remorſe of Conſcience at all. And how this comes to paſs, not only from the nature of the Thing, but by the juſt Judgment of Almighty God, St. *Gregory* hath informed us by the following Paſſage.

" Every Sin which is not ſpeedily purged by Repentance, is either the Cauſe, or the Puniſhment of another Sin. For every unrepented Sin does naturally, and as it were by its own weight, draw us down into the Commiſſion of another; and ſo, is not only a Sin it ſelf, but the Cauſe of a following Sin, and that following Sin again ſo cauſed by the " Firſt, Moral. l. 25. c. 9.

" Firſt, is not only a Sin it ſelf, but the Puniſh-
" ment of the former Sin. It being juſt and
" uſual with God ſo to harden, and to blind,
" the Heart of a Sinner, that, by the demerit
" of one Sin he is permitted to fall into ano-
" ther, and ſo to bind Sin upon Sin. And, as
" the foregoing Sin is uſually from Malice and
" Obſtinacy, ſo the latter proceeds often from
" Ignorance and Inſenſibility, inflicted as a Pu-
" niſhment of the forgoing. Now in regard
" that in the former of theſe, which is both a
" Sin and the cauſe of Sin, the Man acted in
" contradiction to his Knowledge and Conſci-
" ence: In the latter which are Sins, and the
" Puniſhment of Sins, God permits him to loſe
" the Light of Knowledge, and the Remorſe of
" Conſcience, which by Tranſgreſſing againſt
" before, he hath provoked God to conceal
" from him that Precipice, into which he is
" now falling unwittingly, becauſe he would
" not avoid it, when his Eyes were open, and
" he did ſee it before. That ſo Sin may be pu-
" niſhed with Sin, and by the moſt dreadful of
" all Judgments, be made both the Increaſe,
" and the Scourge of it ſelf. To this effect the
" Apoſtle takes Notice of the Jews continuing
1 Theſ. 2. 16. " in their Obſtinacy and Cruelty, that *they*
" *might fill up their Sins alway*; and our Lord in
Rev. 22. 2. " his Indignation ſays, *he that is unjuſt, let him*
" *be unjuſt ſtill, and he that is filthy let him be filthy*
" *ſtill.* Theſe Men then, who defer their Re-
" pentance, have already given God Provoca-
" tion ſufficient to damn them; but yet their
" Sin is ſuffered to grow, that they may receive
" the greater Damnation. Their firſt Sin which
" was the cauſe of Sin, deſerved Puniſhment;
" but God does not puniſh preſently, that, if

" they

" they will not take warning, their following " Sins, which are Puniſhments of the former, may " add to the Number of their Stripes, and " mighty Sinners may be mightily Tormented.

St. *Auguſtine* once more expoſtulates the Caſe thus; " You will ſay perhaps, I am but " young yet, and therefore I will indulge my " ſelf in Pleaſure for a while, and after that I " will repent. Which is juſt as if a Man ſhould " ſay; I will run a Sword through my Body, " and then ſend for a Surgeon to cure me. " Alas! poor Wretch, little doſt thou think, " that a Wound is received in an inſtant, which " cannot be healed but by long time, and acute " Pain, and the Part ſcarce ever reſtored to its " primitve Strength again. When a Man then " commits a grievous Sin upon purpoſe, or ra- " ther Preſumption of repenting afterwards, " Why does he not reflect upon the many Diſ- " eaſes, the many, (even deſpiſed) Accidents, " that may come between and cut him off by a " ſudden unexpected Death, and make his Tem- " poral delay to involve him in everlaſting Dam- " nation? There are two Extremes, by which Men are injurious to the Juſtice and the Mercy of God, both which God hath taken ſufficient care to prevent. " To the intent Deſpair " might harden no Man in a wicked Courſe, " he hath marked out to us the ſure Port of Par- " don and Mercy for all Penitents to make to. " And, that none might delay this Repentance " by Preſumption, he hath made the Day of " every Man's Death uncertain: Thus are both " Inconveniences provided againſt, the ſorrow- " ful Sinner comforted, and the Negligent and " Dilatory terrified. Do not then deſpair, " becauſe thou art promiſed Forgiveneſs; But " do

De honeſt. mueur.

In Pſal. 102.

" do not be ſecure neither, becauſe God hath " not promiſed, that he, who delays his Re- " pentance, ſhall live to be forgiven. Some " Men ſin by want, and others by Exceſs of " Hope; Both are in dangerous Circumſtances. " Wo to them that deſpair! Wo to them that " preſume! Wo to both! Becauſe both neg- " lect to repent. God is Maſter of his own " time and favours; now he calls, now he im- " portunes, now he waits for thy Converſion; " but if thou ſlip this time, and weary out his " Patience; the ſeaſon of Judgment approach- " es, and then will he render unto thee accord- " ing to thy evil Deeds. There were no end indeed of repreſenting to my Reader all that might be collected upon this Occaſion. But, I hope, that little in compariſon, which he finds here will, both for the weight of the Reaſons, and the Authority of the Perſons, have ſo much Credit with him, as to put him upon ſpeedy Amendment, without which he runs ſo manifeſt a hazard of his own Salvation.

CHAP. VII.

Some other Obſtructions to Holy Reſolution. Sloth, Negligence, and hardneſs of Heart.

WEre it poſſible to deſcend into the Hearts of wicked Men, and diſcern all the lurking Corruptions there, many Impediments no doubt might be diſcovered, which have not; and ſome which could not be, particularly inſiſted upon in this Treatiſe. And happy were it for my Reader, if all the hindrances in ſo important an Affair, could be diſtinctly handled; becauſe

becauſe to Perſons of Probity, and an ingenuous Temper, it happens very often, that the very Knowledge of the Diſeaſe is a great ſtep towards the Cure. But *Three* there are however, mentioned in the Title of this Chapter, too manifeſt to eſcape Obſervation, and of ſo great affinity, that I cannot think it improper to treat of them together.

Sect. I.

Of Sloth.

THE *Firſt* of theſe is Sloth. A great and common hindrance, eſpecially to tender and delicate People, who have long uſed themſelves to, or been educated in Eaſe and Idleneſs: And therefore theſe tell you, they are not cut out for taking Pains, or enduring Hardſhip, though their Inclinations to Religion, if you pleaſe to believe them, are as good, and as ſincere as any Perſons whatſoever. Theſe Men will make no difficulty to own, that all which hath been, or can be ſaid upon this Occaſion is true; And they wiſh with all their Hearts, they were in a Condition to practiſe it. But alas! They have a nice Conſtitution, and very imperfect Health, Faſting, and Praying, and going conſtantly to Church, are things their Bodies cannot bear; and the Time, which others employ in theſe Holy Exerciſes, they muſt be content to give to Indulgence, and Diverſion, to Plays and Company; For, ſhould they abridge themſelves of theſe Recreations, they ſhould be quite devoured with Melancholy, and loſe all the comfort of Life. And therefore, ſince they cannot do what they would, they

they make no doubt, but God will accept their good Deſires, and not require Performances, of which they are not capable.

To ſuch as theſe I would recommend a ſerious Conſideration of theſe few Paſſages in Scripture. *The ſoul of the ſluggard deſireth, and hath nothing, but the ſoul of the diligent ſhall be made fat. The deſire of the ſlothful killeth him, for his hands refuſe to labour. He coveteth greedily all the day long; but the righteous doth good and ceaſeth not. The ſlothful man ſaith there is a Lion in the way, I ſhall be ſlain in the ſtreets. Thou wicked and ſlothful Servant, thou knoweſt that I reap where I ſowed not, and gather where I have not ſtrawed: Thou oughteſt therefore to have put my Mony to the Exchangers, and then at my coming I ſhould have received mine own with Uſury. Take therefore the Talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten Talents; and caſt ye the unprofitable Servant into outer darkneſs, there ſhall be weeping and gnaſhing of Teeth.* The Fig-tree which our Bleſſed Lord found full of Leaves without Fruit, is the Emblem of good Deſires and Intentions without effect. And they who reſemble it in this Condition, will as certainly be one Day partakers in its Curſe.

Prov. 13. 4. & 21. 25, 26. & 22. 13.

Mat. 25. 26, 27, 28, 30.

Mat. 21.

From this evil Diſpoſition proceed many very pernicious Qualities and Effects. Such as, that Spiritual Drowſineſs of Mind, which our Saviour commands all his Diſciples to ſhake off when he calls upon them to *Watch and Pray*; and St. *Paul*, when he rouzes his *Epheſians*, with that alluſion to *Iſaiah*'s Prophecy, *Awake thou that ſleepeſt, and ariſe from the dead, and Chriſt ſhall give thee Light.* And yet this Heavineſs is not ſuch an univerſal Stupidity neither, but that their Apprehenſions can be as quick, and their

Mark. 13.

Epheſ. 5. 14.

En-

Endeavours as active upon the Affairs of this World, as thoſe of other Men. Like the ungrateful Wretches in the Parable, they are intent upon their Farms, and their Yokes of Oxen, and can talk as ſhrewdly, and manage as providently upon theſe Occaſions, as one would wiſh; But if you come to argue with them upon the Subject of Salvation, and urge them to Induſtry, in ſecuring an Inheritance Eternal in the Heavens; This is all loſt upon them. They have no Ears to hear, but are in a Dream as it were, This is a ſort of Employment much againſt the Grain, and they who ſubmit to any Trouble, though never ſo laborious, for temporal Advantages, think none too little, or too late, for ſuch as are everlaſting. And thus they doze and trifle out their Lives, till at laſt the Doom read by *Solomon* overtakes theſe ſpiritual Drones too. *How long wilt thou ſleep, O ſluggard? when wilt thou ariſe out of thy ſleep? Yet a little ſleep, a little ſlumber, a little folding of the hands to ſleep; ſo ſhall thy Poverty come, as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed Man.* Prov. 6. 9, 10, 11.

A *Second* ill Effect of this Sloth, hinted at already, is an unreaſonable fear of taking Pains, and a repreſenting to ones ſelf Matters more difficult and impracticable, than in reality they are. Theſe like the Perſons ſpoken of by the Pſalmiſt, *are afraid there, where no fear is:* They frame to themſelves frightful Images of the Service of Almighty God, the inſupportable Hardſhips attending it, and the Dangers and Inconveniences it would expoſe them to. As that, Faſting would ruin their Conſtitution; Going to Church would give them Colds; Receiving the Sacrament would reſtrain them from all the Liberties, that give a reliſh to Converſation; Pſal. 53.

taking

taking an account of their Sins frequently; would kill them with Sorrow, and perpetual Diſſatisfaction. And a thouſand other extravagant Pretences there are, alledged againſt that Service, which in truth is perfect Freedom; And in prejudice to him, who commands Men to *ſerve him with gladneſs*, and bids the *righteous be of a merry heart*. All which are in truth but ſo many fantaſtical *Lions* in the way, excuſes contrived to cover that Sloth, which firſt puts Men upon inventing them.

Pſal. 100. & 32.

A *Third* unhappy Effect of this Temper is Cowardice, and being diſcouraged with every little rub Men find in the way of Virtue. Which is ſo contrary to that Bravery and Magnanimity required of good Men, that nothing can more indiſpoſe them for the perfection of a Chriſtian Obedience. And yet, to ſee the perverſneſs of Humane Nature, theſe very People are not beaten off from Vice, by the much greater Inconveniences that attend it. When yet, it is even demonſtrable, that the Ways of Piety are the leſs rugged of the too: And all the Difficulties, which Almighty God hath thought fit to encumber our Duty with, that ſo he might put us upon giving ſome Proofs, that we love him, when we chooſe to do and endure ſome things ungrateful to Fleſh and Blood for his ſake, are much more tolerable, than the heavy Burden we voluntarily load our ſelves with, by continuing in the Habits, and under the Dominion of Sin. All the ſufferings of ſelf-denial ſubduing and governing our Paſſions, not being comparable to the Torment of living under the Tyranny of any One of them.

The *Fourth* Effect I ſhall mention is, that liſtleſneſs, and unſteadineſs of Mind, which drives Men

Men off from going effectually about even thoſe very things, which they profeſs to be ſatisfied in, and to intend, and reſolve upon. And thus we ſee Multitudes, that talk much of amending their Lives, and ſometimes conſult their ſpiritual Guides in the Caſe, and pretend to receive their Directions with a great deal of Zeal, and go away highly ſatisfied, and yet after all this, do nothing. This is very elegantly expreſſed by *Solomon*, *As a door turneth upon his Hinges, ſo doth the ſlothful upon his Bed.* He is ſometimes in Motion, but like that Door he only moves backwards and forwards, makes no advance, nor ſtirs from his Place, but is, after all, juſt where he was at firſt. He cannot find in his Heart to do even the eaſieſt Things, no not upon the moſt neceſſary Occaſions. For that ſeems to be the importance of that other Obſervation made by the ſame Author, *A ſlothful man hideth his hand in his boſom, and will not ſo much as bring it to his mouth.* Prov. 26. 14. Prov. 19. 24.

Many other very deteſtable Effects of this vicious Diſpoſition might be inſtanced in; but I have ſingled out theſe, becauſe they are the moſt effectual Bar to Holy Reſolutions, and a vigorous Piety. For, what good is poſſible to be done upon a Wretch, that is ſunk into ſuch a ſtupid Inſenſibility, as not to receive any impreſſions from all that can be urged to him concerning his Soul and a future State? What can be expected from a fanciful timorous Creature, who ſtumbles at every Straw, and ſcares himſelf with imaginary Dangers and Difficulties, which have no Being, but what his own ſick Brain gives them? What poſſibility is there of bringing ſuch to run the Courſe, to fight the Fight, to be at pains about reducing their inordinate

Luſts and Appetites into ſubjection, and to beat down the ſtrong holds of Sin and Satan; who are ſo miſerably irreſolute, ſo ſcandalouſly lazy, as never to bear any the moſt profitable, the moſt neceſſary Trouble, or ſo much as to be conſiſtent with their own Thoughts and Intenſions, one poor half Day together?

If there be any way left to take off this horrible hindrance to Salvation and a good Life, I ſhould think it muſt be, by prevailing with theſe Men, to reflect ſeriouſly upon the Labours and Sufferings ſuſtained by the Son of God for their ſakes; upon the indefatigable Pains of the Apoſtles, and other eminent Saints; upon the earneſt Exhortations addreſt to every Chriſtian to *give all diligence to make his calling and election ſure*; *to work out his Salvation with fear and trembling*; *to take earneſt heed, leſt a promiſe being made us of entring into God's reſt, any of us ſhould come ſhort of it*; upon the terrible Threatnigs denounced againſt them, who refuſe to qualify themſelves, and think the Benefits of the Goſpel not worth their Pains; upon the Nature of our preſent Condition; a Condition of Tryal and Diſcipline, and Warfare, and conſequently ſuch as requires labour, and fatigue, ſuffering and hard ſtriving, in them who hope to obtain the Crown; upon the Glories and Advantages of that Crown it ſelf, and the inexpreſſible, the inſupportable Miſery of them, who baſely give out, and loſe it through their own Default. And laſtly, that theſe Men would conſider, that no Life of any ſort can be without ſome Trouble, that they would fairly compute, and balance the preſent Inconveniences of a ſinful Life, againſt the lighter weight of Cares and Troubles attending a good one: But eſpecially, that they would

2 Pet. 1. 10. Phil. 2. 12. Heb. 4. 1.

would think a little, how theſe Bodies of theirs pretended to be too tender for the Duties of Religion here, will be able to dwell with everlaſting Burnings, and be tormented beyond all Meaſure hereafter.

All this is an Argument calculated for their own Principle, and perſwades them to ſpare themſelves, to conſult their own eaſe, and by a ſhort (a very ſhort) induſtrious and active Care, to make ſure Proviſion for a durable, an everduring Reſt. For this Life is the time allowed us to ſecure Heaven in, and by the ſeveral Parabolical Alluſions in Scripture, 'tis therefore termed, the Market to buy in, the Battle to combat in, the Winter to ſow our Corn in, the Day to work in. He that loſes this Market, can never retrieve it more; He that ſhrinks in this Battle, is diſgraced for ever, and treated as a Deſerter; He that lets this Seed-time ſlip, muſt want in Harveſt, and beg when there ſhall be none to give to him; He that Works not the Works of him that ſent him while it is Day, ſhall be caſt into utter Darkneſs. Suffer me then to apply to theſe Sluggards, that advice of the Wiſe Man's, in a more exalted and ſpiritual Senſe, and may they receive it as a neceſſary Admonition, how all thoſe muſt behave themſelves in this, who hope to eſcape Miſery and the very extremity of Want and Diſcomfort in the next World. *Go to my Son, and deliver thy ſelf; give not ſleep to thy Eyes, nor ſlumber to thy Eyelids; deliver thy ſelf as a Roe from the hand of the Hunter, and as a Bird from the ſnare of the Fowler. Go to the Ant thou ſluggard, conſider her ways and be wiſe; which having no guide, overſeer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the Summer, and gathereth her food in the Harveſt.*

Sect. II.

Of Negligence.

I Now proceed to the *Second* Obſtruction, mentioned in the Title of this Chapter, by which I underſtand ſomething more than that Word, in its common Acceptation, is uſed to denote. For under the Character of *Negligent* I comprehend all thoſe People, who, how great ſoever their Care and Application in other Matters may be, are yet abſolutely void of all this, in Matters pertaining to God and Religion; and though they attend very diligently to the Affairs of the World, yet allow Heaven and the Salvation of their Souls, the leaſt, if any Place at all in their Thoughts. Such are thoſe *Epicures* mentioned by St. *Paul*, of whom he told his *Philippians* even weeping: *Whoſe end is deſtruction, whoſe God is their Belly, who mind earthly things:* And heartily, to be wiſhed it were, that this Deſcription did not preſent us with too lively an Image, of Multitudes, who call themſelves Chriſtians at this Day. Such again, thoſe practical Atheiſts mentioned by the ſame Apoſtle, in another of his Epiſtles, *whoſe very mind and conſcience is defiled; who profeſs that they know God, but in works they deny him, being abominable, and diſobedient, and unto every good work reprobate.*

Phil. 3.

Tit. 1. 15, 16.

They do not perhaps fly out into that Degree of Hardineſs, as openly to impugne the Being and Providence of God, but are deſirous to be reckoned among Believers: And yet, to a Man, who examines their Actions, it is manifeſt they are not ſuch at the Bottom. Their Lives are ſo notorious, ſo direct a Contradiction to all thoſe Attributes

Attributes and Excellencies, which every one who believes a God muſt ſuppoſe to be in him, that we may truly call thoſe Men Infidels, by Interpretation, and neceſſary Conſequence, at leaſt: For, how ſhall they paſs for Men poſſeſt with any ſerious Senſe, of the infinite Wiſdom and Knowledge of God, who are not afraid of committing any Sin, provided it can be covered from the Eyes of Men? Or of his Providence and Care of all the Affairs of this World, who neither truſt him in Danger, nor flee to him in Diſtreſs, nor ſtick at any Methods, though never ſo offenſive to him, never ſo contrary to what he hath engaged himſelf to Bleſs, to compaſs their Deſigns? Or of his Juſtice and a Judgment to come, and the Rewards and Puniſhments of a future State, who take no care to appeaſe his Anger, to provide for that dreadful Day of reckoning, to qualify themſelves for that Happineſs, or to avoid thoſe unſpeakable Miſeries which the Holy Ghoſt ſo often, and ſo expreſly declares ſhall then be the everlaſting Portion of the Righteous and the Wicked reſpectively? Men may be as large, and as ſolemn, in theſe Profeſſions as they pleaſe, but there is no other way of proving themſelves in good earneſt, except that of making their Lives bear Teſtimony to the Sincerity of thoſe Profeſſions.

Of this kind again I eſteem them, whom ſome have thought aimed at by thoſe Ordinances in the Jewiſh Law, which prohibited the plowing with an Ox and an Aſs, and the wearing Garments of Linnen and Woollen mixt together; for ſo in effect do thoſe *lukewarm* Chriſtians, whom God expreſſes ſuch a Deteſtation of, for being *neither hot, nor cold.* Men, I mean, who count the ſearch after Truth a matter needleſs,

Deut 22.

Rev. 3.

and of no Conſequence; and are perfectly indifferent what ſort of Principles they entertain. As if the Grounds of Religion were to be remitted to the Men of Learning and Leiſure; and the being always *ready to give a reaſon of the hope that is in us*, were a Precept confined to our Teachers only. Theſe Men of Latitude comfort themſelves with the many Errours, and unhappy Diſputes, that have given diſturbance to Religion; and reſt upon this Excuſe, for their Careleſſneſs in the Point of ſettling their own Mind, that it is of no great Conſequence how a Man believes, for an honeſt Man of any Perſwaſion, may go to Heaven. This indeed is an Opinion rarely fitted for their Purpoſe, becauſe it leaves them at Liberty to accommodate themſelves to any Company, or any Change. No Tyrant's Command; no Errours impoſed by publick Authority can ever come amiſs to them. All Diſcourſe of Religion they look upon as Canting; Eating and Drinking, and vain Mirth, News, and Play, and the like, are their conſtant Entertainment; but for God and his Ways, the very Heathens themſelves do not conſider them leſs, than theſe Men ſeem to do. And can we now with any Propriety of Speech call theſe Men Chriſtians, or Believers? Does not our Bleſſed Saviour make this a Rule of judging, *By their fruits ye ſhall know them?* Does he not lay it down as a certain Maxim, that *Out of the abundance of the Heart, the Mouth ſpeaketh?* And again, that *where the Treaſure is, there will the Heart be alſo?* If then the Fruits of theſe Trees are ſo corrupt, ſhall we ſay of the Trees themſelves that they are Good? When their whole Converſation is made up of Vanity, and all their Deſigns terminate entirely upon the Delights and Advantages

1 Pet. 3. 15.

Mat. 7. 20.

Mat. 12. 34.

Mat. 6. 20.

of

of Senſe and this Preſent Life, ſhall we be ſo abſurd, to think, that either their Heart or their Treaſure is in Heaven? Or may we not rather apply to ſuch the Deſcription of the *Epheſians*, in their yet unconverted State, that *they are Strangers from the Covenant of Promiſe, having no hope, and without God in the World.* Eph. 2. 12.

This is indeed a very general Obſtruction, and ſeveral Cauſes might be aſſigned, which either give Birth, or at leaſt increaſe and Encouragement, to it. But theſe Two are in a more obvious and eſpecial manner obſervable to contribute to it. The *Firſt* is that unhappy difference of ſeveral contending Parties and Opinions in Religion; which by the multitude and intricacy of Diſputes upon controverted and leſs neceſſary Points, and by the ſharpneſs and uncharitable Management of thoſe engaged in them, tempt Men to ſuſpect that Victory and Fame, rather than Truth and the Honour of God, is the Prize they contend for; weary Men out in theſe perplexed Enquiries, till at laſt they grow to a diſeſteem of Religion in general: And, becauſe they find Perſons of great Learning and Judgment diſagree in ſome abſtruſe Points, take up with that moſt unreaſonable Inference, that they can arrive at certainty in none.

A *Second* Thing acceſſory to this Impediment is, Inordinate Love of the World, which naturally draws Men off from the Love of God; nay, even works them up to a Hatred of, and Enmity againſt, him; As both our Bleſſed Lord, and St. *James* have informed us: So that we are not to wonder, if from thenceforward they feel no ſenſible Delight in his Ways, nor retain any very moving Impreſſions of him upon their Minds. And theſe Perſons are very hard to Mat. 6. 24. Jam. 4.

be reclaimed indeed; both, becauſe they are ſunk into ſo great a Degree of Spiritual Inſenſibility, as ſtifles and ſuppreſſes any vigorous Thoughts of Amendment; and becauſe they ſhun the proper Means of their Cure. For what Hope can we conceive of that Patient, whoſe Caſe is deſperate without Advice, and yet is ſo far from following Preſcriptions, that he will not bear ſo much as to hear of a Phyſician, nor allow any body to talk to him of his Danger or his Diſeaſe? Theſe Men then muſt needs be allowed to be in very ſad Circumſtances, who will not be brought to any Senſe of their own Condition; but while they are perſwaded, that they are much wiſer than their Neighbours, take it for an Affront to be told of their Folly.

And yet, This is what they muſt be told of, before any Good can be done upon them. And, would they be prevailed upon to ſuffer the Word of Exhortation, the propereſt Method of doing them Service, would be, to lay open their Sickneſs and the danger of it, by giving them to underſtand, how very diſtant a Temper they are of, from the true Spirit of the Chriſtian Religion; and conſequently from all the hope of Happineſs, which they vainly cheriſh in themſelves, as belonging to them, merely for profeſſing themſelves to be Chriſtians. God requires that we ſhould *love him with all our Heart, with all our Mind, with all our Soul, and with all our Strength.* This is the firſt and great Commandment, a Commandment common to the Law and Goſpel both, a Commandment of Eternal Obligation, and the great Foundation of Morality, of Natural, as well as Revealed, Religion. And, how far are theſe careleſs People from coming up to this Duty, who allow God ſo little Room

Mat. 22. Deut. 6.

in

in their Hearts, and employ ſo ſmall a part of their Thoughts, or their Strength, in his Service? God commands us to ſtudy and to meditate upon his Law, to make it the Subject of our Thoughts and Diſcourſe, Night and Day, at Home and Abroad, early and late; And, how many Hours, how many Days, paſs theſe Wretches, without ſo much as one ſerious Reflection upon this Matter? Can they, who ſcarce ever beſtow one poor Thought upon Chriſt, or what he hath done and ſuffered, what he came to teach, and what to purchaſe for them, can theſe Men be called Chriſtians? They ſay, they believe in God, and ſerve him, but are they to be credited, who uſe all poſſible means to drive him out of their Minds; and, when temporal Obligations, or Decency, or ſome other Reſpect, foreign to Religion, engages them in Exerciſes, of Devotion, account it a Wearineſs and a Burden, to hear his Word, to pray to him to receive his Bleſſed Sacrament, or to do any of thoſe Things, which they who are Chriſtians indeed, moſt gladly embrace the Opportunities of, and eſteem the greateſt Privilege and Bleſſing that mortal Men are capable of on this ſide Heaven?

Chriſt himſelf hath taugth us, what proportion of our Value the Affairs and Enjoyments of this World deſerve, and how far they ought to be from coming into Competition with thoſe of another. *Thou art cumbred*, ſays he to *Martha*, *about many Things*; *But there is one Thing needful*; Luk. 10. And by the Context it is plain, beyond all diſpute, that the *one Thing* meant there is a diligent attendance upon the ſervice of God. But, The Men, of whom I am now treating, find many other Things neceſſary, and this not ſo at all. St. *John* forbids us to *love the World, or the Things* 1 Joh. 2. *that is*.

that are in the World; and they love nothing but the World, and the Things that are in it. St.
Jam. 4. *James* declares every *Friend to the World, an enemy to God*; and they think all Men their Enemies, who are not Friends to the World. Chriſt or-
Luk. 18. & 21. ders us to *Pray always, and not to faint*; Theſe Men ſeldom or never apply themſelves to God at all in this holy Duty. St. *Paul* would not have
Eph. 5. *Fornication, nor Uncleanneſs, nor Covetouſneſs, nor Filthineſs, nor fooliſh Talking, nor ſcurrilous Jeſting, once named* among Chriſtians; as Things altogether unbecoming the Converſation of Saints; And yet the Practice and Converſation of theſe Men is chiefly made up of this abominable mix-
1 Pet. 5. ture. St. *Peter* bids us be *Vigilant*, be *Sober*; and
Rom. 12. St. *Paul*, to be *fervent in Spirit, and continuing inſtant in Supplication, and all good Works*; And theſe Perſons are the very Reverſe of all this, Careleſs and Remiſs, Heavy and Inſenſible, Perverſe and Inflexible, Contemning and Abhoring all thoſe Duties, that tend to the mortifying of their Paſſions, and the true Service of their Crucified Saviour. What part then have theſe Men in the Lot or Portion of Chriſtians, but the empty Name only? And how little that is like to profit them in their greateſt Extremity, our Lord hath given them ſufficient warning; by ſaying,
Mat. 7. 21, 22. not only that, *Not every one that ſaith unto him Lord, Lord, ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*; but many, who had a great deal more to alledge for themſelves, than a bare calling him Lord; Even *prophecying in his Name, and caſting out Devils, and doing many wonderful Works*, theſe ſhall be excluded that place of Bliſs too, whither nothing can prevail for admittance, but that one indiſpenſable condition, *The doing the Will of his Father which is in Heaven.*

And

And this is ſufficient to ſhew, how great and dangerous an Obſtruction, this Supine, and ſenſeleſs Negligence is, againſt that Holy Reſolution, which I am preſſing all my Readers to. For, if Chriſt, as is evident, both from the poſitive Precepts, and parabolical Alluſions in the New Teſtament, if he, I ſay, require, that every one, who in good earneſt pretends to be his Diſciple, ſhould be ſo vigorous and ſo perfect in this Reſolution, as, from the inſtant he is convinced how rich a Treaſure is hid in this Field, to go and ſell all that he hath, and purchaſe it; that is, in plain Terms, If it be a Chriſtian's Duty, to prefer the purſuit of thoſe Deſigns, which aim at the Kingdom of Heaven, before all the Buſineſs, and Pleaſures, and Enjoyments of this Life, of what kind ſoever they be; and rather venture all, than fail in this one Point: If Chriſt I ſay, require us, as he evidently does, to ſave our Souls and ſerve him at any rate, and out of Hand; then, what ſhall become of thoſe Men, or when can we ever hope to bring them to this Temper, who are ſo far from taking Heaven by Violence, that they will not even accept it, when offered, and in a manner thruſt upon them? So unlikely to part with their All and buy this Treaſure, that they cannot be prevailed with to part with even their Superfluities, for the Relief of Chriſt in his needy Members? So unlikely to come up to the Price, at which the Goſpel hath ſet it, that they do not care ſo much as to treat about the purchaſe; but are ſick of that Man, and his Converſation, who comes in Friendſhip and Duty, to make Propoſals, and perſwade them to this gainful Bargain?

That ſuch is the Temper of too too many, daily Experience does but too ſadly convince us; and, till they fall into ſome better way for changing

ing their Diſpoſition, to ſpare an unneceſſary Enlargement here, I would entreat them to read attentively thoſe Chapters in the *Firſt* Part of this Book, which give an Account of the Reaſons and Purpoſes, for which we were created and ſent into this World, and likewiſe of that reckoning, which God will moſt certainly call us to for the time we ſpend here. This, it is to be hoped, may in ſome good Degree awaken them out of this Spiritual Lethargy, and convince them, that however diſſolute, and wicked People may ſleep ſecurely, yet their Damnation ſlumbreth not. And conſequently, that there cannot poſſibly be any Condition more dangerous than that Man's, who bends his Mind, and endeavours wholly to vanity and trifle in effect, (for ſuch all the Matters, quite beſide the Purpoſes, for which he was ſent into the World:) and in the mean while paſſes over his main Buſineſs, as if it were a Thing only by the By: Who will not be perſwaded to lend one ſerious Thought, to that which is moſt Neceſſary, moſt Important, moſt Advantagious; that which requires and deſerves his whole Study and Care; and, without which all other Study and Care will only tend to render him more miſerable more inexcuſable.

SECT. III.

Hardneſs of Heart.

THIS is the laſt Obſtruction I ſhall ſpeak to, and by it I mean, that Evil Affection of Mind, mentioned by St. *Paul* in the Second to the *Romans*, and occurring in ſundry other Paſſages of Holy Scripture. By which, when compared together, we ſhall find to be meant, ſuch an obſtinate

Rom. 2. 5.

and

and pertinacious Spirit, as ſettles it ſelf reſolutely, never to give Ground, nor to move out of the preſent Evil Way, it hath taken to, whatever is, or can poſſibly be ſaid to perſwade a Change. And this I reſerved for my laſt Particular, becauſe it is indeed the laſt, and higheſt pitch of Wickedneſs. It includes, and exceeds all the Impediments that went before, and adds to all the reſt a wilfulneſs and malicious Purpoſe, directly oppoſite to that Godly Reſolution, which I have been all this while labouring to gain Men over to.

This Hardneſs of Heart admits of different Degrees, and we plainly find different ſorts of Perſons affected with it; Some in a much more dangerous and raging; Others in a lower and more treatable manner. But ſome there are, who have got up to that higheſt and moſt impenetrable pitch of Obduration, that, though they know and conſider, they do amiſs, though they ſee, and believe, and remember perfectly that they who do ſuch things, act againſt the plain and eternal Rules of Reaſon and Religion, and provoke God to Anger and ſevere Vengeance, yet come what will, they will have their Humour; and out of ſome Worldly or Sinful Reſpect or other, they perſiſt in their Wicked Intentions, in deſpight of all that can be urged by others, or by their own Conſciences, to terrify or to divert them. An Example of this we have in *Pilate*, who, though he examined Jeſus over and over, and as we may gueſs, would have been glad to find ſome colourable Pretence for his Sentence againſt him; though he was not only warned by his Wife, but fully ſatisfied in his own Conſcience; though he declared publickly and ſolemnly, that no fault could be found

in

in him; yet ſtill, rather than loſe the Favour of the People, and incurr the Cenſure of not being a Friend to *Ceſar*, he condemned him to Death, and in ſo doing manifeſtly condemned himſelf of notorious Injuſtice. Such an Example we have likewiſe in *Pharaoh*, who, though he ſaw the Miracles of *Moſes* and *Aaron*, and ſmarted under the mighty Hand of God in ſo many repeated Plagues upon himſelf and his Subjects; yet, rather than he would ſeem to be vanquiſhed and forced at laſt to relent, perſevered in his Malice, till at laſt he was utterly deſtroyed in his Wickedneſs. Such an Inſtance again we have in the Idolatrous Jews, who returned this, as their final and peremtory Anſwer to *Jeremiah*, *As for the Word, that thou haſt ſpoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee; But we will certainly do whatſoever thing goeth out of our own Mouth.* But alas! we need not go ſo far for Examples of this kind, every Age and Place is too full of them. All that ſet themſelves to revile, and contemn, and perſecute Religion and Good Men; All that endeavour to expoſe Innocence, and laugh Virtue out of the World; All that decline the Practice of it for fear of Deriſion, or the Imputation of Singularity, are evidently of this ungodly Temper, and ſeldom come off from it, till God himſelf cut them off in the midſt of their Malice and Fury againſt him.

Jer. 44. 16, 17.

Others again there are, who, though they do not perſiſt in their Wickedneſs directly againſt their own Knowledge, are yet but very little, if at all more excuſable, than thoſe that do. Such I mean, as will not know, nor be made ſenſible of their Danger, but, by an affected Ignorance of their Duty, labour to keep their Conſciences quiet, and dread nothing ſo much, as

that

that Light, which may diſcover them to themſelves, and bring them over to a better courſe. Theſe are the perſons, who, as *Job* obſerves, *ſay unto God, Depart from us, for we deſire not the knowledge of thy Ways:* and, of whom *David* tells us, that *they are like the deaf Adder that ſtoppeth her Ears, which refuſeth to hear the Voice of the Charmer, charm he never ſo wiſely.* Where by the Charmer is meant the Holy Spirit of God, which by all poſſible Means labours to diſengage Men from the bewitching Deluſions of Sin; But, as another Prophet complains, *They refuſe to harken, and pull away the Shoulder, they ſtop their Ears, that they ſhould not hear: yea they make their Hearts as an Adamant-Stone, leſt they ſhould hear the Law, and the Words, which the Lord of Hoſts hath ſent in his Spirit by his Prophets.*

Job 21.14. Pſal. 58. 4, 5. Zech. 7. 11, 12.

This grievous Sin is, upon all Occaſions, charged upon the Jewiſh Nation. *Ye will not come to me that ye might have Life. How often would I have gathered you, and you would not?* ſays our bleſſed Saviour. And St. *Stephen, Ye ſtiff-necked and uncircumciſed in Heart and Ears, ye do always reſiſt the Holy Ghoſt:* Meaning thereby, all the Meſſages ſent by God, when thoſe Servants and Miniſters, in whom the Holy Ghoſt ſpake, came to teach them the Truth, and preſs'd them to amendment of Life; All thoſe Miracles he wrought by thoſe Men's Miniſtry for their Conviction; All the inward Checks and Holy Motions which he ſecretly breathed into their Hearts. And yet, notwithſtanding the Opportunities of knowing God's Good Pleaſure, notwithſtanding the Teſtimonies he gave to the Truth, though they had nothing to object either againſt the Doctrine it ſelf, or the Miracles that confirmed it, which could in Reaſon bear them out; they ſtill reſolved not

John 6. Mat. 23. Acts 7.

to

to be won-over, but in ſtead of complying with what they could not contradict, they fell foul upon their Teachers, and all this, becauſe as *Jeremy* ſays, *They had a revolting and a rebellious Heart, and had made their Faces harder than a Rock.* And again, lamenting this inflexible Obſtinacy, *Why* ſays he, *is this People ſlidden back by a perpetual backſliding? They hold faſt deceit, they refuſe to return; I hearkned and heard, but they ſpake not aright; no Man repented him of his Wickedneſs, ſaying, What have I done? Every one turned to his courſe, as the Horſe ruſheth into the Battel.* And the ſame Diſpoſition is plainly intimated in all thoſe kind Expoſtulations between God and his People, in the Eighteenth and Thirty Third of *Ezekiel, Why will ye die, O Houſe of* Iſrael? *For I have no Pleaſure in the Death of him that dyeth, wherefore turn your ſelves and live ye.* What could more expreſly, more pathetically, lay their deſtruction at their own Door, than thus in effect to ſay, *Why will my People ruine themſelves, when I have been ſo induſtrious, and am ſo vehemently deſirous to ſave them? Why are they wilfully deaf to all my Inſtructions and Reproofs? ſo perverſely bent upon Miſchief, as not to learn how they may prevent it? ſo cruel to themſelves, as not to be made ſenſible of their own Danger; That Danger, which they may avert, and which I, who tenderly love them, moſt paſſionately wiſh they would ſee in time, that ſo they might eſcape it?*

Jerem. 5.

Imagine with thy ſelf, Whoever thou art, that readeſt theſe paſſages, that God in them is addreſſing himſelf, not only to thoſe Jews, but to many Thouſands of ungracious Chriſtians, and among them perhaps, to thy own ſelf. For to thee he certainly ſpeaks, if thou refuſe his good Motions, and the other means

of

of Grace afforded thee; if thou holdeſt out againſt his repeated Importunities, and be reſolved to follow the Imaginations of thy own Heart, and to continue thy old vicious Cuſtoms, whatever the Conſequence of theſe Things may be at laſt. And, God knows, there are but too many pretended Chriſtians, that give occaſion to be argued with after this Manner. They dare not reade Good Books, nor hear Good Sermons, for fear of being convinced, that ſome Things are neceſſary to be done, which yet they have not the Heart to do: for fear their Conſciences ſhould be awakened with ſome powerful Truth, and not let them reſt any more, till they have bid adieu to ſome darling Sin, or mortified ſome Paſſion, which they find great Delight in gratifying. How many, who have not the Confidence to ſpeak it out, have yet this Language in their Hearts, that they *have made a Covenant with Death and are in League with Hell!* They are content to take what follows, provided they may enjoy the preſent without any diſturbance; and therefore deſire not to be interrupted with any vain Perſwaſions. Theſe may do Good upon them who have not made their laſt Choice, but for their own parts they are fixed. Let others, who think Heaven worth their while, take it upon the Terms as it is promiſed, but they are at a Point, and all they covet now, is not to be diſturbed with any new diſcoveries of their Danger; which they had rather ſuffer than ſee, and be made uneaſy with Propoſals, which they have already determined not to cloſe with, for the preventing it.

What a marvelous infatuation is this, to affect to go to Hell with our Eyes ſhut, and how fitly compared to the Rage and Venom of Ser-

pents? Of theſe the Prophet *Iſaiah* ſays, that
Iſa. 48. 4. *their Neck is an Iron Sinew, and their Brow is Braſs.* What can be more Emphatical to expreſs the hardneſs and impenetrability of the Metal? Agreeable to which Repreſentation is that of St. *Bernard*: "A hard Heart, ſays he, is neither "wounded by Compunction, nor ſoftened by
L. 1. de conſid. ad Eug. c. 2. "Goodneſs, nor moved by Entreaties, nor bent "by Threatnings, nor at all made more gen-"tle, but more ſtiff rather and tough, by Cha-"ſtiſements. It is ungrateful for the Mercies "of God, diſobedient to his Commands, enra-"ged by his Judgments, made wanton and pre-"ſumptuous by his Grace and Promiſes, loſt to "all ſenſe of Shame, fool-hardy in Danger, "rough and intractable in the Affairs of this "World, inſenſible in thoſe of another, for-"getful of the Paſt, regardleſs of the Preſent, "improvident for the Future.

And if this be a true account of the Diſeaſe, where ſhall we be able to find a Remedy? What can we do to mend it? Lay before ſuch a one the heinouſneſs of his Sins he triumphs in; or at leaſt he is not mortified with the ſad Spectacle. Talk to him of the Reaſonableneſs and the Advantages of Religion, the Folly and Danger of a Wicked Life, he is Proof againſt all your Arguments. Entreat him, importune him, nay add Tears to your Prayers, he is not to be melted down at this rate. Tell him of the angry Juſtice of an avenging God, and the Torments of Hell, he looks upon them, as a melancholick Dream, and a painted Fire. If it pleaſe God to ſcourge him with Afflictions, he is enraged, and grows more furious and deſperate than before. If he invite him with Mercy and Kindneſs; he is ungrateful, and conſiders not, that theſe lead

to

to Repentance. If you aſſure him of forgiveneſs upon his Reformation; This puts him upon turning God's Grace into Laſciviouſneſs, and renders him Preſumptuous and Secure. If you repreſent to him the Vileneſs of his own Behaviour; he is loſt to all Shame. If you lay before him the Terrors of the Divine Vengeance; he is Proof againſt all Fear. In a Word, he regards not the Diſpenſations of Providence towards others, though they be moſt remarkable, either for the rewarding of eminent Virtue, or puniſhing outrageous Vice. And what way then is there left to do this Man Good, whom neither Precepts; nor Counſels; neither Mercies nor Puniſhments; neither his own nor other People's Proſperity or Adverſity, will have any Influence upon?

From this Account of a hardned Heart, we plainly perceive, that when God declared he would harden the Heart of *Pharaoh*, he threatned that Puniſhment, as the dreadfulleſt Judgment, that could poſſibly be inflicted for his former Iniquities: And yet all this, in the true Acceptation of the Words, imported no more, than that God, by withdrawing his Grace, would ſuffer *Pharaoh* to perſiſt in his Wickedneſs, and to harden his own Heart. And on the other Hand, when he promiſes a ſpecial Mercy, it is expreſs'd in theſe Terms, that *he will take away from his People a ſtony Heart, and give unto them a Heart of Fleſh*; that is, one tender and ſenſible, and ſuch as ſhall be moved by Good Impreſſions. And there is no doubt to be made, but this is effectually the greateſt and moſt valuable Bleſſing, that God does, at any Time beſtow upon Mankind. To have ſuch a Heart, as when it's natural Corruptions draw it aſide, Ezek. 36.

is quickly check'd and controlled; and, when the Remembrance of Sins recurrs upon it, is deeply pierced and wounded with the Senſe of its own Vileneſs and Ingratitude, and deſperate Folly, and bleeds under the afflicting Remembrance, and is effectually excited to Repentance and Amendment. And, on the other hand, the heavieſt Curſe that can poſſibly befall any Chriſtian, is to be given over to a Reprobate Senſe, and a hard Heart; ſuch as ſins without any Remorſe; and by doing ſo, heaps up a dreadful load of Vengeance to it ſelf; ſuch as St. *Paul* compares to the Ground which no Rain can ſoften, but is curſed, *and bearing nothing but Briars and Thorns, its end is to be burned.*

Heb. 6. 7.

And does not this account now furniſh us with an excellent Reaſon, why the Holy Ghoſt ſhould upon all occaſions, ſpeak ſo vehemently, and with ſuch Deteſtation againſt this evil Diſeaſe; and warn Men ſo ſolemnly, and ſo frequently, that they be careful not to be corrupted by it? For where indeed could ſuch Warmth and Affection be more properly employed, than in ſecuring Men from a Diſtemper, that carries ſo many mortal Symptoms with it, and is but a very little on this ſide final Reprobation it ſelf? To this purpoſe is that of St. *Paul* to the *Epheſians*, whom he warns againſt filthy and obſcene Diſcourſe, and ſome other infamous Practices which betray a profligate Mind, from this Argument particularly; *Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are ſealed to the Day of Redemption.* He likewiſe adviſes the *Theſſalonians*, by no means to *quench the Spirit*. Now theſe Texts, though different in Form, yet in Subſtance come up to our preſent Subject. For the Spirit of God is then *quenched*, when our Wickedneſs

Eph. 4. 30.

1 Theſ. 5 19.

edneſs ſtifles, and reſiſts his holy Motions; and he is then *grieved*, when we continue obdurate, and perſiſt in ſuch diſſolute Practices, as are an Affront and Diſhonour, a declaring War againſt, and open defiance of, him.

Another paſſage there is, and a very ſolemn one, which does not only by Interpretation, but in expreſs Terms come up to our Caſe. 'Tis that to the *Hebrews*, *Take heed, Brethren, leſt there be in any of you an evil Heart of Unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called to Day, leſt any of you be hardned through the deceitfulneſs of Sin.* What *Joſhua* obſerves concerning a Temporal Judgment upon the Cities of *Canaan*, is very applicable and true, in a ſpiritual Signification, *It was of the Lord to harden their Hearts, that he might deſtroy them utterly*; for when God ſuffers Men to come into this Condition, they ſeem to be Perſons quite given over, and marked out for Ruin. Hence are thoſe Obſervations of the Wiſe-man, *Happy is the Man that feareth alway, but he that hardneth his Heart ſhall fall into Miſchief*; and, *He that being often reproved, hardneth his Heart, ſhall ſuddenly be deſtroyed, and that without remedy.* Hence is that Prayer of *Solomon*, *Give therefore thy Servant an underſtanding Heart, that I may diſcern between Good and Evil.* What we tranſlate an *Underſtanding*, is in the Original, a *Hearing Heart*, that is, a tender and tractable Spirit, willing to be taught, and ready to receive Good Impreſſions. Such a one, as is deſcribed in that memorable Paſſage of *Iſaiah*, *To this Man will I look ſaith the Lord, even to him that is Poor and of a contrite Spirit, and trembleth at my Word.*

Heb. 3.12.

Joſ. 11.20

Prov. 28. 14.

Prov. 29.1.

Iſa. 66.12.

This then is the Temper, which God values highly, and requires we ſhould be of. A meek, and gentle, and humble Spirit, a Heart full of contrition for offences paſt, and diſpoſed to receive every Inſtruction and Reproof, every Promiſe and Threatning, with all that Reverence and Awe, which becomes the Word ſent down to us from ſo great a Majeſty. How then ſhall we eſcape, if we ſtand unconcerned, and pay no regard at all to ſo many Exhortations, to ſo many Warnings of our Danger, deſigned to awaken us, denouncing Wrath inſupportable and everlaſting Torments, againſt obſtinate impenitence? How ſhall we dare to provoke the Diſpleaſure of an Almighty Avenger? And yet this we manifeſtly do, if we defer our Holy Reſolutions, and will not be perſwaded to amend our Lives. A very ſmall part of that which hath been ſaid in this Treatiſe, might ſuffice to prevail upon a conſiderate and well-diſpoſed Mind for ſpeedy Reformation; But if the whole make no impreſſion, nor promote theſe Good Purpoſes, my Reader hath a very hard and impenetrable Heart indeed: And all I can do more for ſuch a one, is moſt humbly and earneſtly to beſeech him, in whoſe Hand the Hearts of all Men are, to ſoften him with the precious Blood of that only Son, and our only Saviour, who was content to ſhed it upon the Croſs, for this very purpoſe, that he might *turn the Hearts of the diſobedient to the Wiſdom of the Juſt, and purify unto himſelf a peculiar People, zealous of Good Works.*

The CONCLUSION.

I Have, throughout this whole Treatiſe, confined my Diſcourſe to ſuch Arguments, as might move my Reader to this ſingle Point of Holy Reſolution only, without enlarging particularly upon the ſeveral Methods fit to be taken, for the entring upon, advancing in, and bringing to its juſt Perfection, a truly Chriſtian Life. And this I did, upon a certain View, that when once this Reſolution is vigorous and ſtedfaſt, a Mind ſo diſpoſed will never be at a loſs for proper ways of putting it in Execution. As alſo, being conſcious to my ſelf, how many excellent Books are extant and eaſy to be met with, and how ready the Bleſſed Spirit of God will be with his inward Aſſiſtances and Directions to forward and give ſucceſs to the Pious Endeavours of all ſuch, as diligently and conſcientiouſly make uſe of thoſe outward Helps, of which his gracious Providence hath provided ſo plentiful a Store. And though more, it is poſſible, might be ſaid for this one Point, than either occurs in this, or can be comprehended in any Volume of a moderate Proportion, yet I cannot but be of Opinion, that either the Reaſons alledged here may ſuffice; or elſe, that where they prove ineffectual, nothing will be ſufficient for the vanquiſhing thoſe Men's Obſtinacy, and reducing them to the Obedience of that rightful Lord, from whom by Sin they have grievouſly revolted.

For here we ſee unanſwerable Arguments for the Love and Service of Almighty God, and the effectual renouncing and irreconcilable deteſtation of Vice. We have evident Demonſtra-

tion of a God that made us, and all the World; We are informed, for what End he created us, and that this was no other, than to glorify his Majeſty by our Service; We are taught, wherein that Service required from us conſiſts, and that God at preſent expects, and will accept no other, than the living in Obedience to the Commands of Chriſt, delivered in his Holy Goſpel; We are told, what particular Qualifications are there ſet down, as diſtinguiſhing Characters of all the true Diſciples of Jeſus: We have had warning of that impartial Account, which God will one Day take of all our Actions; How wonderfully good to us he is in the mean while, how watchful over us, how ſollicitous to win us, how liberal in his Rewards if we do well, how ſevere and terrible in his Puniſhments if we continue Refractory; hath been at large explained.

And further yet, in regard the Tempter throws many Objections and Diſcouragements in our way, to beat us off from that Reſolution, which effectually breaks his Yoke, and ſets us free from his Tyranny, I have taken care to lay open the Vanity and Deceit of thoſe Obſtructions and Excuſes. The unreaſonableneſs of Deſpair, of the pretended Difficulties of a Holy Life, the falſe Flatteries of the World and its Allurements, are detected, and expoſed: The Folly of preſuming upon God's Mercy, if we perſiſt in an evil Courſe; The Danger of delaying our Repentance, of Slothfulneſs in our great Affair, of Careleſſneſs in matters relating to Religion and a future State, and laſtly the almoſt deſperate Condition of hard and ſtony Hearts, which are proof againſt all the Arts of Perſwaſion, and the Diſpenſations of Providence, is here at large de-

declared; And theſe Rocks are now ſet in plain View, that no unwary Soul may ſplit upon them, and make Shipwrack of Faith, and a good Conſcience hereafter, for want of due Notice, where his Danger lies, and how it may be avoided. And what now can any Man in Reaſon deſire more, to diſpoſe him to a good Life? What need can there be of other Arguments to deterr Men from Wickedneſs and Vice, than thus undeniably to prove, that they who perſevere in it, do moſt aſſuredly deceive and deſtroy their own Souls?

Do not then read this Book meerly for Diverſion and Entertainment; do not, when thou haſt read it through, lay it aſide without any farther Thought, and perſiſt in thy vicious Cuſtoms as ſecurely as before; but remember it treateth of thy greateſt Concern, and that thy Condemnation will be more certain, more heavy, if thou neglect and defeat theſe Motives to Repentance, than if they had never come within thy Knowledge, or been offered to thy Conſideration at all. And how wilt thou eſcape, or who can have hopes of thee, if theſe Arguments are loſt upon thee? Doſt thou think to go to Heaven without forſaking thy Sins? That is impoſſible: Thou mayſt as well imagine to baniſh the Holy God from thence, as to find a Place there for a polluted Conſcience. Wilt thou then be content to forego Heaven, and yet at the ſame time hope to eſcape Hell? Alas! That is every whit as extravagant a Deluſion as the former: Another Condition moſt certainly awaits thee, after thy Departure hence, and that Condition lyes all in Extremes, there is no middle State, between unſpeakable Bliſs and Glory, and everlaſting Torture and Shame. Wilt thou then adjourn

the

the Thoughts of this Matter till ſome diſtant Day? Nay, but conſider, Man, what hath been made out to thee upon this Point: That there is no likelihood of thy being either more able, or more willing, to repent at any time hereafter, and ſtrong Preſumptions, that thou wilt then feel thy ſelf leſs ſo, than thou art now: If God's Grace be rejected at preſent, it is great odds, it will either not be offered, or if it be, that it will not meet with better Reception another time. The offers of this Grace are in the diſpoſal of the Giver, and ſo are the Opportunities for uſing it too; and thou canſt have no ſecurity, that thou ſhalt not be cut off from the Land of the Living, before the time, thus pretended to be fixed for thy Amendment comes. The only way then of doing this great Work effectually, is to do it preſently.

Break away therefore from that Tyrant, that Uſurper that wrongfully holds thee in Bondage; Shake off his Chains immediately, and cut his Bands in ſunder; and throw thy ſelf into the Protection of that Triumphant Saviour, whoſe Arms are always wide open to receive thee, and who by his marvellous Condeſcenſion to the Death of the Croſs, *hath overcome him that had the power of Death, even the Devil.* Behold thou haſt it in thy Power to add to the already unſpeakable Joys of Heaven; the Converſion of a Sinner we are told will do it; O! make the Angels glad, and thy ſelf happy; renew thy Covenant with God, by firm Reſolutions of better Obedience, and dare to acquit thy ſelf Manfully, as becomes a good Souldier of Jeſus Chriſt: Imitate St. *Jerom*'s Courage, and determine with thy own Heart, that neither Father nor Mother, neither the tendereſt Affection, nor the moſt

Heb. 2.9.

Hier. ad Heliodor.

moſt vehement Importunities of any Relations or Friends upon Earth, neither Temptations nor Terrors, Proſperity or Adverſity, ſhall keep thee one Moment longer from Chriſt; ſince no Calamity can be comparable to that of a Heart eſtranged from him, and no Duty to others ought to take Place, to the prejudice of the Duty thou oweſt to thy own Soul.

And oh! that there were in us all ſuch a Heart, ſo reſolute, ſo zealous, ſo fervent, in the Love and Service of our deareſt Maſter and Redeemer: That we would now at leaſt, bethink our ſelves, not be ſatisfied to feed upon Husks with Swine, any longer, when like that Image of all returning Sinners the Prodigal Son, we have aſſurance of being honourably received, affectionately and gladly entertained, and as well eſteemed by our reconciled Father, as if we had never offended him at all. I call this an Aſſurance, for it is nothing leſs; ſince we have ſo many, ſo expreſs, ſo ſolemn Declarations of his Readineſs to forgive. His I ſay, who cannot lye, and who, whatever he promiſes, performs it to the uttermoſt. Return then I beſeech you, and lay hold on thoſe Promiſes, who never failed any, who cannot fail them that believe and depend upon them. Run while he calls, and ſlip not the time which can never be retrieved; for all the World, couldſt thou poſſeſs it entire, would not make thee ſo happy, as this one Act of ſeaſonable Complyance with the Invitations of thy God and Saviour: This would be the critical Moment, from which thou mighteſt date thy preſent Comforts, and everlaſting Bleſſedneſs: And O! that it may pleaſe the Father of Mercies ſo to diſpoſe thine, and mine, and every Chriſtians Heart, to the Attainment of everlaſting

lasting Salvation, that we may work the Works of him that sent us, while it is Day, before the Night come, wherein no Man can Work. Grant this we beseech the, O merciful Lord, for his sake, who came to call Sinners to Repentance, even thy Son our Saviour Jesus Christ. *Amen.*

THE END.

THE CONTENTS.

CHAP. I. *THE Miſchief and Danger of Inconſideration,* Page 1.

SECT. 1. *That Conſideration muſt deſcend to Particulars,* p. 7.

CHAP. II. *That there is a God, rewarding Good and Evil,* p. 12.

SECT. 2. *The Arguments by which the Heathens proved that there is a God,* p. 17.

SECT. 3. *The Proofs of a God, peculiar to the* Jews, p. 29.

CHAP. III. *Of the End for which Man was Created,* p. 47.

CHAP. IV. *Religion that Service of God, which is the End of Man. Of the Chriſtian Religion in particular,* p. 56.

SECT. 1. *How Chriſt was foretold before his coming,* p. 60.

SECT. 2. *How the former Predictions were fulfilled in our Jeſus, while upon Earth,* p. 78.

SECT. 3. *How Jeſus proved his Deity after his return to Heaven,* p. 89.

SECT. 4. *The Concluſion,* p. 107.

CHAP. V. *Of Faith and Good Works,* p. 112.

SECT. 2. *Of Good Works,* p. 114.

CHAP. VI. *Of eſchewing Evil, and doing Good,* p. 120.

SECT. 1. *Of avoiding of Sin,* p. 122.

SECT. 2. *Of doing Good,* p. 135.

CHAP. VII. *Of the laſt great Day of Account,* p. 142.

SECT. 1. *Of the Diſpenſations Preparatory to the general Judgment,* p. 146.

SECT. 2. *The Proceedings of that Day it ſelf,* p. 149.

SECT. 3. *The Conſequence of the general Judgment,* p. 153.

CHAP. VIII. *Of the Nature and Guilt of Sin,* p. 157.

CHAP. IX. *Some other Aggravations of Sin, partienlar-*

by the Majesty of God, and the Benefits we receive from him, p. 169.
SECT. 2. *Of the Benefits we receive from Almighty God,* p. 172.
CHAP. X. *Of the time of our Death, and the different Notions we shall then have of the Matters relating to our Souls,* p. 184.
SECT. 1. *The Application of the former Sections,* p. 193.
CHAP. XI. *Of the Sinner's Punishment after this Life,* p. 202.
SECT. 2. *Of the Nature of the Punishment appointed for wicked Men after this Life,* p. 207.
SECT. 3. *The second sort of Punishment called that of Loss,* p. 214.
CHAP. XII. *The noble Rewards of Good Men,* p. 223.
SECT. 1. *Of this Reward in general,* p. 226.
SECT. 2. *The felicity of Body and Soul in Heaven,* p. 234.
SECT. 3. *Some Circumstances increasing the Joys of Heaven,* p. 239.
SECT. 4. *Of the Christian's Title to this Reward,* p. 247.

PART II.

THE Introduction. Pag. 251.
CHAP. I. *Of the First Obstruction to Holy Resolution. Distrust of God's Mercy, upon the account of the Greatness, or Number of our Sins.* p. 253.
SECT. 1. *The Nature of God's Love to Mankind.* p. 257.
SECT. 2. *How tenderly God expresses himself to Sinners in Scripture.* p. 265.
SECT. 3. *Concerning the assurance of Pardon which God hath given to all them that truly repent and turn to him.* p. 270.
SECT. 4. *The Application of the former Sections.* p. 282.
CHAP. II. *The Second Obstruction to a Holy Resolution. The pretended Difficulties of a Good Life. The Fallacy of this Pretence discovered, and the many Advantages, which render Virtue and Piety easy and pleasant, explained.* p. 291.
SECT. 1. *The Helps for making a virtuous Life easy.* p. 298.

SECT. 2.

SECT. 2. *Some other Helps and Comforts peculiar to Good Men, and instrumental to their present Happiness.* p. 311.
SECT. 3. *A necessary Caution to such as attempt this Change.* p. 323.
CHAP. III. *The Third Obstruction considered. Fear of Persecution and Affliction.* p. 327.
SECT. 1. *Whether Suffering be the Lot of all Good Men.* p. 329.
SECT. 2. *The Reasons, for which God, notwithstanding his Love for Good Men, suffers them to be thus afflicted.* p. 335.
SECT. 3. *What Grounds of Comfort Good Men may have in their Troubles.* p. 344.
SECT. 4. *How Men ought to behave themselves under Affliction.* p. 351.
CHAP. IV. *A Fourth and most dangerous Obstruction to Holy Resolution. The Love of the World.* p. 359.
SECT. 1. *Of the Vanity and Deceitfulness of the World.* p. 363.
SECT. 2. *The World compared to Thorns, and why.* p. 368.
SECT. 3. *How these Thorns choke the Word, and make it unfruitful.* p. 376.
SECT. 4. *How we may use the World safely, and to our Advantage.* p. 382.
CHAP. V. *A Fifth Obstruction to Holy Resolution. Presumption upon God's Mercy.* p. 388.
SECT. 2. *In what Respects God's Mercy is greater than his Justice.* p. 401.
CHAP. VI. *A sixth Impediment to a Holy Resolution. Deferring our Repentance out of a vain Hope of doing it to better Advantage hereafter,* p. 415.
SECT. 2. *The Example of the Thief pardoned up the Cross, considered. And the Doubtfulness of a Sinner's Conversion at his Death,* p. 431.
SECT. 3. *Some Examples of Persons, who perished in their Impenitence, and pious Exhortations to Repentance,* p. 447.
CHAP. VII. *Some Obstructions to Holy Resolution,* i. e. *Sloth, Negligence, and Hardness of Heart,* p. 458.
SECT. 1. *Of Sloth,* p. 459.
SECT. 2. *Of Negligence,* p. 466.
SECT. 3. *Hardness of Heart,* p. 474.
The Conclusion. 485.

The Reader will find in Part 1st. Chap. 3. that two Sections are drawn into one, the second beginning p. 53. l. 10. and p. 363. A whole Section concerning Purgatory is left out.

Part 2d. Chap. 4. p. 363. Six Sections are brought into four. Chap. 5. left out, so that the 4th. in the Old is the 5th. in the New Edition, and so to the end.

ERRATA.

Page 47. r. Chap. 3. p. 335. r. Sect. 2.

BRITISH LIBRARY 29 76 FEB